



SHALOM HARTMAN מכון  
INSTITUTE שלום הרטמן



# In Every Generation:

## A Haggadah Supplement for 5784

Illustration by Michel Kichka, "Kibbutz Be'eri, *Darom Adom*: Kibbutz Be'eri, the Red South." This illustration is a tribute to Kibbutz Be'eri from early settlement days to the red poppy flowers which blossom near the Israel-Gaza Border. Created in October 2023 as part of "Wrapping Memory," the Bezael Academy's memorial tribute to communities attacked on October 7.

# Table of Contents

## Contributors

How Will We Celebrate Passover This Year? .....	1
Jessica Fisher, Dasee Berkowitz	
קדש: Elevate Their Voices .....	5
Avner Goren	
יחזק: Embracing Brokenness .....	6
Noam Zion, Mishael Zion	
מגיד: Telling Our Story .....	7
Let All Who Are Hungry Come and Eat. ....	8
Leah Solomon, Yehuda Kurtzer	
מה נשׁתנה: Old and New Questions .....	10
Noam Zion, Mishael Zion	
Adapting the Story in Every Generation .....	12
Mishael Zion, Vlada Neda, Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Ziva (Tezew) Mekonen Degu	
The Four Children .....	16
Noam Zion, Eleanor Harrison Bregman, Donniel Hartman, Sara Labaton, Joshua Ladon and Masua Sagiv	
ברך: Pour Out Your Wrath and Your Love .....	19
Avraham Shlonsky, Rachel Goldberg, Noam Zion and David Dishon	
הלל: Praising God When Our People Are Captives .....	21
Jacky Levy, Oded Mazor	
נרצה: Next Year in Jerusalem: Messages of Hope .....	23
David Grossman, Iris Eliya Cohen	

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# How Will We Celebrate Passover This Year?

## Introduction to In Every Generation

Jessica Fisher

The injunction, *Bekhol dor vador chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo keilu hu yatzah mimitzrayim*, “In every generation, each person is obligated to see themselves as if they had participated in the Exodus from Egypt,” is one of the most evocative lines in the Haggadah. It is a call to empathy, to feel the suffering and redemption of our ancient ancestors as our own. It is also a command to use the story to bring meaning into our own contexts, as we imagine ourselves being lifted out of despair and into freedom.

Every year, we see ourselves in this story in a different way—this is part of what makes the seder such a lasting and powerful ritual. This year, the reverberating trauma of October 7, ongoing war in Gaza, thousands of Israelis displaced from their homes, rising antisemitism, and weakening bonds of allyship around the world give us new lenses for understanding the Exodus story. In some cases, the words of the Haggadah feel more relevant; in others, the Haggadah’s proclamations clash with reality. How can we celebrate a holiday of freedom when over 100 people are still held captive in Gaza? How do we call for all who are hungry to come eat at our tables when so many Israelis are not at their own seder tables and millions of Palestinians are on the brink of famine?

While there are no definitive answers to these questions, the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America has developed *In Every Generation: A Haggadah Supplement for 5784*, a collection of readings, essays, and questions inspired by *The Israeli Haggadah: Special Edition* (Hebrew, 2024) by Mishael Zion and Noam Zion, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of their 2004 *Israeli Haggadah*, later released in English as *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices*. We encourage you to read *In Every Generation* as you prepare for the holiday and then to bring it to your seder table, where we will reenter a generation-spanning conversation and envision ourselves anew in the Exodus story’s themes of persecution, resilience, and redemption.

After October 7, Mishael began collecting and reading *haggadot* from the founders of the *kibbutzim* next to Gaza, finding strength in their determination and in the contemporary resonance of their additions to the Haggadah. He writes, “Reading their words, I was reminded that the power of the Exodus is not only in the covenant of common fate that we forged, but also a covenant of destiny.... It affirms that in every generation we can, and we must, change history.”

These *haggadot* include one created by founding members of what would become Kibbutz Be’eri, one of the *kibbutzim* in the Gaza Envelope that was attacked on October 7, 2023. The nascent group related to the Exodus story of suffering and redemption and, like generations of Jews before and since, they added new layers to the ancient texts, recording their aspirations for their new community through supplemental texts and illustrations. As Yigal Zorea describes in *Lines and Dots*, his blog about Kibbutz Be’eri, several years after that first Passover, the kibbutz members hired designer Paul Kor to embellish their initial efforts. The image below comes from the end of Kor’s version of the Haggadah. It depicts groups from ancient history including those scattered from the Tower of Babel, the Israelites enslaved in ancient Egypt, and the *ma’apilim* arriving in the land of Israel during the British Mandate period, all arriving and merging into one collective at Kibbutz Be’eri, where they receive comforting verses from the prophets, affirming that their hardship will be rewarded and the Jewish people will be gathered together once more.



The people who created the *Kibbutz Be'eri Haggadah* were in the early stages of building a safe and self-sustaining home in the desert, and their conditions were precarious. The Passover story of biblical enslavement and salvation served as the foundation for their own resilience. Their Haggadah is just one example from a rich history of Jews adapting the framework of the Haggadah to suit their contexts and to foster meaningful contemporary conversations. Many *kibbutzim* across Israel still make their own *haggadot* for Passover, timelessly drawing on the same hopes and questions that the founders of Kibbutz Be'eri included in 1946. But this year, six months after the kibbutz communities of the Gaza Envelope were attacked, it is particularly powerful to bring voices from these *kibbutzim*—their worry and their optimism—into our seder conversations, preserving this history of storytelling, even as the buildings and communities they built stand empty this Passover.

We invite you to use some or all the materials from *In Every Generation* to bring contemporary questions to an ancient ritual and story, and we encourage you to invite guests to bring their own supplemental materials, too. Like the founders of Kibbutz Be'eri, who created a Haggadah depicting the lush fields that surrounded them and quoting biblical texts, we hope the resources of *In Every Generation* will help you tell the story of the Exodus in a way that reflects the values, challenges, and aspirations of Jews today. The supplement includes excerpts from kibbutz *haggadot*; essays on understanding and responding to the “wicked child”; pieces on the role of hope in Jewish history and in the present; and more.

This year, when we say *Leshana haba'ah beyerushalayim*, “Next year in Jerusalem,” may we do so with the intention and prayer that next year, Jerusalem will be at peace.

# A Guide for Seder Hosts and Facilitators

## Dasee Berkowitz

Each year, the youngest present at the seder asks, “How is this night different from all other nights?” This seder night, the first since the events of October 7, the Israel-Hamas war, and a steep rise in antisemitism worldwide, many of us are wondering, “How will this seder be different from all other seders?”

- While on other seder nights, we retell the ancient story of our people’s liberation from Egyptian bondage, on this seder night, we are keenly aware that we, too, are actors in the unfolding of Jewish history. We may feel extra responsibility to make this Passover meaningful.
- While on other seder nights, we welcome grandparents, parents, and children to attend our seders, enacting the value of *l’dor vador* (from generation to generation), on this seder night, we know that generational divides can bring with them strong political differences. On this holiday of redemption, we may feel nervous about differences in perspectives feeling unredeemable.

- While on other seder nights, we seek to design a seder experience that is relevant, engaging, and real, on this seder night we might also seek to focus on what unites us and to avoid conversations that could divide us.

- While on other seder nights, the promise of spring and its renewal uplifts us, on this seder night we come to the table with mixed feelings. Some of us place an empty chair at our table to remember those still held hostage by Hamas. Others feel the painful absence of soldiers killed in combat. Many feel the ache for all of those who have been killed and are suffering due to the conflict. Longing and heartbreak accompany us this seder night.

For everyone hosting a seder, you are in a unique position. You have the opportunity to invite your guests to become active participants in an ancient ritual that holds the potential for healing, healthy discussion, and hope. The seder table is the stage for this ancient rite of retelling. Friends, family, and other guests are the actors. The Haggadah is our script. As you prepare the stage for the seder, I invite you to consider four conceptual frameworks to guide your preparation.

## Framework 1

### Set Intentions: Enable freedom within boundaries

As the convener, you set the tone for the evening, from the moment you extend the first invitation. By articulating your intentions for the evening clearly, you can put your family and other guests at ease. The journey toward freedom invites full participation and also requires structure. Just as children can express themselves freely when the boundaries are clear, your guests will feel comfortable sharing openly when boundaries are set and intentions are articulated.

Toward the beginning of the seder, share a few intentions (or in Hebrew, *kavvanot*) to encourage participation, questions, and mutual respect. To get the maximum amount of buy-in, you can set two intentions and ask folks to share what they would add. Consider choosing an intention from this list or choose one that is more suitable to your setting.

- Speak in the first person about your experiences and opinions.
- Share from a place of authenticity about what causes you pain and what brings you joy.
- Agree to be awkward and know that your contributions will be received with care.
- Give everyone at the table the benefit of the doubt.
- Approach each other with curiosity.

## Framework 2

### Tales of Resilience: Make space for elders and their stories

This seder night, our path toward freedom must be paved by a resilient spirit. Lessons in resilience are most readily learned from our elders. We need their voices and their stories of how they have come out of Egypt over and over again. Draw out the lessons they learned from enduring adversity. Ask the children to be the bridge to the elders and have them ask the following questions or generate your own:

- Share a political or historical challenge you or your family has faced.
- How did you overcome or deal with these challenges?
- What is a lesson you have learned about resilience that you wish you had known when you were young?

## Framework 3

### Redemptive Questioning: Practice asking better questions

Passover is the festival of questions. Because slaves and those in bondage can't ask them, questions are a medium by which we know we are a free people. Freedom carries with it great responsibility. So many of us are not careful about how we speak, and what we ask. Asking combative questions can put others on the defensive (e.g., "what were you thinking?") and prevent true communication. As journalist and radio personality, Krista Tippett, once wrote:

Questions elicit answers in their likeness...It's hard to transcend a combative question. But it's hard to resist a generous question. We all have it in us to formulate questions that invite honesty, dignity, and revelation. There is something redemptive and life-giving about asking a better question. (*Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*, pg. 30)

Asking generous questions is a skill we can invite our seder-goers to practice. Encourage people to ask open-ended questions like, "Who do you look up to? What inspires you about them?", "What brought you to that way of thinking?" or "What is a different way of understanding this?" Learning to ask better questions can help build a bridge with people around the table who seem hard to reach.

## Framework 4

### Celebrate Life: Elevate gratitude

Gratitude is a hallmark of resilience. It can hold space for loss even as we celebrate life. The structure of the Haggadah, which places a short Hallel selection (psalms of gratitude) in *Maggid* (the main section of the Haggadah) reflects the insight that words of praise and gratitude are always possible, even before we reach a redemptive ending. The Jewish people is a resilient people. To paraphrase resilience researcher, Dr. Lucy Hone, "Don't lose what you have to what you have lost" ("The Three Secrets of Resilient People," TEDx Christchurch, August 2019).

Take a moment at the beginning of the seder to have your guests look around the room to appreciate everyone who is there. At the end of the seder, ask everyone present to share a word of personal gratitude for the evening. Gratitude for what is present in our lives is that much more important in times when we know there is so much that is not yet redeemed.

Family relationships and friendships are long journeys of discovery and can hold discomfort. As you go through the seder night, invite your guests to ask questions about the texts in the supplement, and to bring their own perspectives. If arguments start to brew, welcome them. As the convener, if you find that a few people are dominating the conversation, invite other people to join the discussion by saying, "I wonder if there are other perspectives..." Remember your role at the seder is not to achieve world peace. Instead, it is to create an environment in which everyone can have an experience that will soon turn into a memory. Ensure that everyone around the table feels that they are valued, and they belong.

Our families, friends, and communities are the contexts in which we work out our ideas and ideals. Each person gathered around your table is meant to be there. We need everyone, young, old, loudly opinionated, and passive alike. In a world of so much strife and division, you are a gatherer. Inclusivity, patience, and love will pave your way forward.



# קידוש: Elevate their Voices

We begin the seder by reciting Kiddush, the blessing over wine, marking the moment and the meal as a sacred occasion. In a symbolic nod to our freedom, many have a custom to pour wine or grape juice for the person next to them, but not for themselves. This year, when so many in Israel are not able to sit at seder tables because they are hostages, serving in the IDF, or displaced from their homes, this ritual of pouring a glass for others takes on even greater significance.

To begin your seder, we invite you to read the following piece, written by Avner Goren for the *Kibbutz Nir Oz 1996 Haggadah*, which was later republished in the *Be'eri Kibbutz Haggadah* in 1999. Avner, a child of Kibbutz Nir Oz founders, and his wife, Maya, were murdered in their home when Nir Oz was attacked on October 7. Their adult children, Gal, Asif, Bar, and Dekel, survived, and they are moved by the inclusion of their father's voice in this Haggadah supplement. In this poem, Avner asks the reader to raise a glass. As we read Avner's poem and raise our glasses to begin the seder, we hold in our hearts those who cannot be at seders this year and think about ways we can elevate their voices.

## Lift Up a Glass!

Avner Goren (Translated by Ilana Kurshan)

*Look at the fruit salad:*

*Some fruits are sour, and some fruits, sweet  
Some are more juicy, some, harder to eat  
Some are more smooth, some, rougher-skinned treats.  
Each fruit brings its own taste and colors and texture  
And when all mixed together, they create something new  
Far more than just each fruit alone.*

*So too with us. We're made up of all kinds:  
Some work the land. Some look to heaven for signs.  
Some of us are visionaries. Some, more practical types.  
We come in all sizes, all shapes, and all stripes.  
Some set out on new paths. Some settle rather than roam  
And each brings their own language, customs, and  
beliefs from home.*

*We are an ingathering, a kibbutz (gathering) of  
peoples, a multicultural nation,  
An immense, breathing, and living creation  
Renewing itself with so much innovation.*

*We lift up a glass to all who returned to our land  
To the ingathering of exiles,  
To immigration, to integration,  
both present and past,  
We lift up a glass.*

Illustration by Michel Kichka, "Kibbutz Be'eri, Darom Adom: Kibbutz Be'eri, the Red South." This illustration is a tribute to Kibbutz Be'eri from early settlement days to the red poppy flowers which blossom near the Israel-Gaza Border. Created in October 2023 as part of "Wrapping Memory," the Bezalel Academy's memorial tribute to communities attacked on October 7.

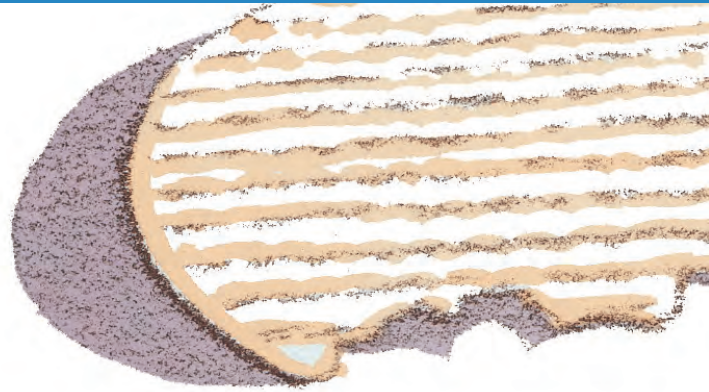
## Questions for Conversation

- In this piece, Avner Goren toasts the members of his kibbutz and, by extension, toasts the Jewish people. As you begin your seder, whom would you like to recognize through a toast?
- We included "Lift Up A Glass!" as a way to preserve one October 7 victim's voice and story. What voices and stories do you want to lift up tonight?



# יָחַץ: Embracing Brokenness

In the *Yakhatz* ritual of the Passover seder, we break the middle of three *matzot*, reserving the larger half to be eaten as the *afikoman* at the end of the meal. In the same way that someone spilling wine on a white tablecloth can break the ice at a formal meal, breaking the fragile matzah opens the door for honest and robust conversation about challenging subjects during the *Maggid* section that follows. The texts below offer two approaches to consider for *Yakhatz* this year. The first is a ritual of invitation, responding to the pain of absence and loss by encouraging seder participants to metaphorically invite missing loved ones and strangers to the seder table. The second is an excerpt from *A Night to Remember*, reminding us of the power of recalling brokenness.



## 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 setting an empty place to acknowledge those massacred and kidnapped on October 7, and the Israeli soldiers who have died in defense of their homes and families.

## Questions for Conversation

- Is there someone whose name you would like to add to the list of those you miss at your seder this year? Would you like to tell part of their story during *Maggid*?
- Can you think of other rituals, songs, pieces of art, or monuments you have encountered that make space for people who are no longer or unable to be with us?

## Entering the Broken World

Mishael Zion, from *A Night to Remember*

The Passover 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 *afikoman*, at the end of the seder.

This brokenness is neither just a physical nor a political situation: It reminds us of all those hard, damaged places within ourselves. All those narrow places from which we want to break free. In Hebrew, Egypt is called *Mitzrayim*, reminding us of the word *tzar*, narrow. Thus, in Hasidic thought, *Mitzrayim* symbolizes the inner straits that trap our souls. Yet even here, we can find a unique value, as the Hasidic saying teaches us: “There is nothing more whole than a broken heart.”

## Questions for Conversation

- What does the sound of breaking matzah evoke for you?
- How does the ritual of *Yakhatz* frame the narrative of the Exodus and the rituals of the seder?
- What does the Hasidic saying “there is nothing more whole than a broken heart” mean to you? Has your understanding of the phrase changed over the past year? If so, how?

## The Ancestor Wall and *Maggid*

In an interview on the Shalom Hartman Institute's *Identity/Crisis* podcast episode, "Leadership Amidst Uncertainty," Erica Frankel, Executive Director of the Office of Innovation and co-founder of Kehillat Harlem, shared her family's unique practice of remembrance:

In our home, in our kitchen, my husband and I have what we call our ancestor wall. It's just a wall of ... any of the photos that we can track down, really, of our parents and our grandparents and our great-grandparents. That's about as many generations as we have photos of.

I remember that [each] generation ... looks incredibly different from one another. I have a portrait on my wall of my great-grandfather wearing a long black frock and a hat. I have pictures on my wall of the very next generation, my grandfather wearing a Hawaiian shirt and no head covering, setting up a *sukkah* in Cameroon where my dad lived. I have photos of my dad and my own family, the next generation, in a very different setting, in Georgia where I grew up. And then I look at my own Russian-speaking family in Harlem and think, how bizarre that this is just one generation later.

The collection of texts that makes up the *Maggid* portion of the Haggadah can have the power of an "ancestor wall," offering us multiple entry points as we tell the story of the Exodus and of the Jewish people overcoming obstacles across millennia. For this section, we offer a number of texts you might use to connect guests to different parts of *Maggid*.

## Supplements for *Maggid*

### Let All Who Are Hungry Come and Eat

The script of the Haggadah teaches us to open our tables to all who are hungry as we engage in the exercise of remembering our people's suffering. This year, in the face of new trauma, grief, and divisions, we offer two framings for this open invitation: to hold onto empathy and to find a place at our tables for a true sense of collective peoplehood, even when it is difficult.

### Old and New Questions

Using questions from historic kibbutz *haggadot* as examples, we encourage you to invite seder participants to ask their own questions about what makes this night (or year) different from all others.

### Adapting the Story in Every Generation

We have included four stories of people adapting the seder to meet a particular moment in history, modeling the ways Jews have translated and continue to translate the Haggadah and themes of Passover through the generations.

### The Four Children

We conclude our supplement of *Maggid* with contemporary interpretations of how to address the prototypical four children today, including an account of someone who recently converted to Judaism and a roundtable of multiple approaches to understanding the wicked child.

# Let All Who are Hungry Come and Eat

הָא לְחֶמְא עֲנִיָּא

## Learning Empathy from the Bread of Affliction

Leah Solomon

Since October 7, many Jews in Israel and throughout the world have felt not only more vulnerable and afraid, but also more alone than ever before.

For six months, we have experienced a sense of unrelenting trauma, pain, and heartbreak as we grapple with the brutality of the October 7 attacks and the horrifying reality of more than 100 Israelis still being held hostage in the depths of Gaza. And we have watched as much of the world seems not only to have forgotten our pain and fear, but to have turned against us, painting Israel—and sometimes even those who care about Israel—as genocidal aggressors.

It is understandable that when we are feeling abandoned, attacked, and consumed with fear for our own people, we might find it difficult to truly see or care about Palestinians in Gaza. Though our minds know the magnitude of their suffering, our hearts, overflowing with our own pain, may struggle to hold space for the awareness that their lives, too, have been shattered.

Yet, as we begin *Maggid*, we recite, “Let all who are hungry come and eat.” At precisely the moment that we start narrating our people’s archetypal experience of oppression and suffering, suffering so severe that we had to eat the “bread of affliction” to survive, our tradition calls us to invite in all who are hungry and in need. Just when we might be most inclined to focus inward, the Haggadah reminds us of the link between remembering our own suffering and our obligation to care about all who are suffering.

In years past, this was easier. Before October 7, although we knew that Jewish history has seen many tragedies, few of us alive today had experienced such a cataclysm. Never, until now, were we confronted with the excruciating task of holding another people’s suffering even as our own is so vast and raw, let alone doing so when the perpetrators of the atrocities against us are members of that very people, and when the suffering of that people is being inflicted in large part by our own.

Yet, it is not despite this connection, but in profound awareness of it, that we must compel ourselves to see.

Two peoples live in this land, and both are here to stay. As Jews we have an even greater obligation to care about and to strive to end Palestinian suffering—not only because no human being deserves to suffer as Gazans are suffering, and not only because we should strive to be the kind of people who care about such suffering, but because our lives and futures are inextricably linked.

The horrors of this year have shown us that our suffering, too, is inextricably linked to the suffering of our neighbors: neither Jews nor Palestinians anywhere in the world will live in safety until we all do; and none of us will be truly free until all of us are free. Expanding our hearts’ capacity to hold the suffering of Gazans who are desperately hungry and in need is the first step in charting a path toward a better future, so that all Jews and Palestinians in Israel, Gaza, and throughout the world, might live in security and freedom.

## Questions for Conversation

- The holiday of Passover and the Haggadah unpack the story of our ancestors, the ancient Israelites, who were oppressed by and then freed from enslavement. Yet, instead of calling on Jews to become more insular and not to trust others, we are taught that our experience of eating “the bread of affliction” calls us to open our tables to all who are hungry. What role does empathy play in your Jewish identity?
- How do you balance the desire to seek protection when feeling vulnerable with the command to open our doors and hearts to the suffering of others?

# כָּל דְּכַפֵּין Inviting the Jewish People to the Table

Yehuda Kurtzer

At the outset of the telling of the Exodus story, we issue a powerful call: All who are hungry, come and eat! This is not the standard “who’s hungry?” that rustles everyone to the table. The words are in Aramaic and they also reference the Paschal sacrifice, which means this formula is very old. In ancient times, the Passover feast was a group effort by necessity: any gathering of people celebrating the festival had to consume the Paschal lamb in its entirety, by daybreak. Guests and hosts had mutual interest in feasting together to complete their obligations.

The rushed eating of the Paschal lamb reenacted the core of the story that the seder tries to tell about the Exodus, marking the moment when we became bonded to one another as a people. We start the book of Exodus as a disparate group of tribes, but we leave Egypt together; and we mark that special collective bond with this feasting ritual of co-dependence.

Many of us try to reenact this in our homes today, filling our seder tables with guests, but I always feel a little regret when I reach these words in the Haggadah and it is too late to invite others. I long for the days when a group roasting its lamb outside its tent could just look around for the lonely and the not-included and invite them to participate. Passover should be one of those moments where we seal the cracks of exclusion in our communities, where we recognize that none of us will complete the obligations of peoplehood without all of us having tables at which to sit.

Today, I feel a deeper resonance. We are splintered as a community. War polarizes us and pushes us to separate tents, and it is harder and harder to imagine that we belong to the same people.

This invitation at the outset of the seder is our radical opportunity to try, at least this one time a year, to imagine an alternative, and perhaps it is also a moment for us to try to make our homes peaceful at the outset of a dinner that might include a lot of arguments. It is reminiscent of a similar formula that we recite in synagogue as the Yom Kippur fast begins, wherein we give permission to ourselves to “pray with the sinners.” Yom Kippur and Passover are similar in that they are biblical festivals for which the price of non-participation is that you are excised from the community. If you don’t join in, you are out.

Every Yom Kippur and Passover, there are a lot of people around the table who might feel that they are on the outside. Our liturgy asks us to set aside our biases and our skepticism, and to see, for just a moment, the radical diversity of the Jewish people represented by those who have come to sit with us for the evening. In both our feasts and our fasts, we strive—if only for one night—to be one people.

## Questions for Conversation

- Yehuda Kurtzer describes the Haggadah’s open call, “Let who are hungry come and eat,” as an invitation into peoplehood. Share a moment from your own life where you experienced a sense of connection with the Jewish people.
- In his conclusion, Yehuda draws a parallel between this part of the Haggadah and Yom Kippur, noting that both pieces of liturgy open the door to participation for those who may feel on the outside. Are there times you have felt outside of the Jewish community? If so, what was the context? What institutional or cultural conditions cause some Jews to feel that they are on the outside of the Jewish community? How might we change these conditions so that next year we can feast together at one communal seder table?

# מה נשתנה: Old and New Questions

## How is This Year Different?

Noam Zion

When extended families and distant friends gather for the annual seder, it is usual to catch up and ask what is new. To deepen this exchange, some families ask each one at the table to share the most important ways in which they or their world has changed since last year's seder. Some share personal milestones or losses, while others note the ways they have grown and what they have learned, or describe experiences that have impacted them and their communities.

## Questions for Conversation

- What are the new or newly acute questions you are asking yourselves this year about Jewish identity and Jewish peoplehood?
- Since last Passover, what has changed for you individually, in your community, for the Jewish people, for the world?



Illustration by Michel Kichka from *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices* (2007).

# Contemporary Versions of *Ma Nishtana* from Early Kibbutz *Haggadot*

Mishael Zion

Asking questions at the seder was initially intended to be spontaneous and genuine, but the rabbis composed the four questions we now recite each year. Even with these in place, the seder still invites new questions, asking why the world is the way it is and pointing towards what it could be.

Before and after the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, secular *kibbutzim* issued new *haggadot* reflecting the Holocaust and the return to Jewish sovereignty for the first time in two thousand years. In recalling the killing of Israelite babies in Egypt and the struggle for freedom from persecution and slavery, these kibbutz members felt the acute relevance of Passover's story.

One of these *haggadot's* most original contributions was introducing a custom of composing contemporary questions for the young to ask the founders of the kibbutz. For example, in the 1930s and early 1940s, kibbutz *haggadot* include the following questions:

- Why do people hate Jews throughout the entire world?
- Why is there so much bloodshed in the world? How bizarre is this world, in this year, in this generation?
- What happens to people whose consciences are silenced?
- When will peace reign in our land and in the entire world?
- On Passover, every Jew is obligated to ask him or herself: When was I born? Where was I born? What historical memories do I carry with me?

## Questions for Conversation

- What are your questions about what makes this night or this year different from all others?
- The young kibbutz question writers turned to the elders of their *kibbutzim*. What resources are available to answer your questions this year?
- Choose one of the questions from the early kibbutz *haggadot* to discuss at your seder.



Illustration by Maryam Bartuv from *Kibbutz Gvar'am Haggadah*, 1943. Kibbutz Gvar'am is in the Gaza Envelope and its members were evacuated after October 7. They were cleared to return home in January 2024.

# Adapting the Story in Every Generation

In *Crow and Weasel*, a fable inspired by North American Plains myths, Barry Lopez writes, “The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them ... Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive.” Maybe this is why *Maggid*, the storytelling section of the Haggadah, is the heart of the seder. In fact, the Haggadah teaches us, “The more expansive a person is in recounting the story of departing Egypt, the more praiseworthy.” This line invites seder facilitators and guests to weave their own creativity, experiences, and insights into the seder’s storytelling.

Below, you will find four stories by four writers, each representing a different family and a different Jewish experience. In the first, Mishael Zion paints a portrait of the many voices, past and present, that are represented at his family seders. Vlada Nedak describes her introduction to Passover in Ukraine and the importance of translating the Haggadah into Ukrainian. Tamar Elad-Appelbaum expresses the importance of asking questions and the need for collective liberation. Finally, Ziva (Tezezew) Mekonen Degu recounts her family’s annual retelling of their own exodus, from Ethiopia to Israel. As you read these excerpts, we invite you to consider your own family’s history and how telling that story has changed over time and been integrated into different contexts.

## The Mitzvah to Tell Our Story: A Three-Generation Haggadah Project

### Mishael Zion

I will never forget the first seder I led in 2002: I was a twenty-one-year-old soldier in the Israeli army serving in Rafah, between Egypt and Gaza, home for the holiday. My father, Noam, encouraged me to take on the role of seder leader.

We planned the night meticulously, including customs of Jews from around the world: sitting on the living room floor as Yemenite Jews do, passing the seder plate in blessing and song over the head of each child and adult in the tradition of North African Jews, wearing white like the German Jews, and beating each other with green onions during *Dayenu* like the Jews of Persia and Afghanistan. It was a wonderful and joyous evening: my youngest sibling prepared a quiz with prizes to accompany *Ma Nishtana*; my older sister offered a feminist analysis of contemporary slavery based on *Avadim Hayenu*. As we ate *maror*, my mother told the tale of the devout Christian neighbors who saved her father during World War II. After we read the line, “A person is obligated to see oneself as if they left Egypt,” my paternal grandfather told us about how, as a chaplain in the US Airforce immediately after World War II, he and his Jewish soldiers in Okinawa composed an original Haggadah as a humorous parody about serving in the military. Then my grandfather described organizing a seder for his fellow soldiers in the Haganah in 1948, just weeks before the founding of the State. The great writer Shmuel Yosef Agnon led that seder, which was held in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Talpiot, where I grew up. In the telling and hearing of these stories, past and present became more deeply intertwined.

The Haggadah teaches us that stories of persecution and redemption are bound together like the Hillel sandwich of *maror* and matzah: *In every generation our enemies arise to try to wipe us out and in every generation each of us is obligated to see ourselves as having participated in the Exodus from slavery to freedom.* I understand today, as a father to my daughters and as son to my parents, how much these two themes of freedom and challenge stand at the foundation of every conversation between parents and children. Parents want to grant their children freedom and hope for the future, but also to instill in them the lessons of centuries of Jewish suffering. Children want the freedom to set out on their own independent path and formulate for themselves their destiny, yet they can only do that confidently based on a rooted sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. The Haggadah reminds us that our family story is always a combination of two things: the memory of the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in Egypt and the commandment to believe that next year we will be free people.

## Questions for Conversation

- This excerpt identifies several seder traditions from around the world. Does your family have any unique traditions or rituals for your seder? If so, what are their origin stories?
- Share one particularly memorable seder you have experienced. What made it special?
- Mishael describes the two poles of the seder narrative as persecution and freedom. Share a story from your life or your family history that reflects these themes. What are other important themes of the seder?



# The New Ukrainian Haggadah: *For Our Freedom Za Nashu Svobodu «За нашу свободу»*

Vlada Nedak

“The more they oppress us, the more we increase.” (Adapted from Exodus 1:12)

My first Passover lasted about four hours. I was twelve years old, and the seder was packed with people my grandfather’s age. I understood nothing because the entire celebration was in Hebrew, but I only spoke Russian and Ukrainian. I felt like the simple child who can only ask: “What is this?”

Years later, in 2022, when my family gathered for the Passover seder, I was able to lead the seder for them. I explained the symbolic meaning of certain foods, told the Exodus story, and emphasized how long it had taken for the Israelites to get out of slavery. It was the second month of the full-scale war between Ukraine and Russia. The air raid siren was howling, and I was unsure whether we should stay at the table or run to a shelter. I found some comfort in the fact that during World War II, Jews, even in death camps, had practiced some of the rituals of Passover.



Illustration by Zoya Cherakaski, “Ma Nishtana (2022): How is this night different?”

Unfortunately, many Ukrainian Jews do not speak Hebrew and can't understand the prayers and texts in their original language. This means many Ukrainians read the Passover texts in Russian. As the war continued, I began to worry: How can we celebrate our freedom in the language of the oppressor? I resolved that in the future, we must celebrate Passover, the holiday celebrating freedom from oppression, not only in Hebrew, but also in Ukrainian—a language that has become a symbol of courage, fortitude, and indomitable will, the language of the land where we were born and raised. This new Ukrainian Haggadah is named *For Our Freedom* (2024), quoting from the Ukrainian national anthem, “Soul and body shall we sacrifice for our freedom.” This phrase echoes the mood of Ukrainian Jewry, that, in response to the Russian invasion, has continued to develop its distinctive identity. This title reflects our desire to unite for the sake of our freedom and to claim our unique identity as Ukrainian Jews.

## Questions for Conversation

- In this piece, Vlada Nedak describes herself as the “simple child” at her first seder. Can you share a time when you participated in a Jewish ritual where you felt out of your depth? What impact did that experience have on you?
- Vlada translated the Haggadah into Ukrainian in part as a political statement about language and in part to empower Ukrainians to feel ownership over their Jewish literacy and pride in their language. What are examples of times when you have found yourself telling a story differently because of a specific context? When have you encountered tools, like translation, that have helped you feel a greater sense of competence or empowerment over texts, rituals, or other parts of Jewish life?

# A Faithful Girl's Question: How Can We, Too, Go Out of Egypt Tonight?

Tamar Elad-Appelbaum

Moses replied to Pharaoh: “We will go [out of Egypt, all of us] with both our children and our grandparents.” (Adapted from Exodus 10:9)

On one seder night in Bat Yam, when I was a little girl of approximately seven, our extended Bouskila family, originally from Morocco, gathered around the Passover table of my beloved grandparents, Saba Ya'ish and Savta Zari, may they rest in peace. We began the seder with great excitement, in song and in joy. But as the seder got longer and longer, my grandfather noticed everyone was growing tired, even though we had not yet finished the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah. So he announced: “My sweet ones! There are some tired people here, so let's ask Savta, the daughters-in-law, and the beloved granddaughters to go to the kitchen to prepare the food, while the rest of us complete the readings from the Haggadah. Thus, we will succeed in speeding up a bit the Exodus from Egypt tonight.”

Savta Zari got up and went to the kitchen. So too, my mother and my aunts. Now it was my turn, the oldest of the granddaughters, to join the other women who were already in the kitchen. But suddenly, I, a little girl, stood up and cried out: “No, Saba! It is you who taught me that on this night everyone came out of Egypt together. It is you who taught

me that we are all free and we were all destined to live as free people in Eretz Yisrael. And now you send the women to the kitchen? How will the whole family together come out of Egypt tonight and arrive to the land of Israel?”

I asked the question of the faithful child. The question of a faithful girl, a granddaughter.

Everyone went quiet. Then my beloved Saba Ya'ish arose and announced: “The girl is right. Just as then—so tonight; just as then—we always come out of Egypt only when we are all together, the whole family, united and helping until we arrive!”

On that night in my grandparents' home, the whole Bouskila family went out of Egypt. Together we finished the *Maggid* portion of the Haggadah. Together we went to the kitchen. Together we all helped each other. And together we merited to become free men and free women in Israel. That night, we sang until the middle of the night—Hallel, the Song of Songs, songs of praise and liturgical poems. On that night, Saba Ya'ish and Savta Zari showed us the way to the land of Israel, the way of family togetherness, the way of honoring God's creations with humility and faith, listening to one another and taking mutual responsibility for one another.

## Questions for Conversation

- In this anecdote, Tamar Elad-Appelbaum describes herself as a child learning from her elders in such a way that they changed the course of their seder plans to “come out together from Egypt.” Can you think of a time where you learned from someone with greater authority than you? What is an example of a time where you or someone else changed something that was “always done this way”?
- Tamar argues, based on the verse from Exodus 10:9, that the story of the Exodus was about collective liberation—Israelites of all ages and genders were redeemed together. What are some of the contemporary implications of her charge that we must listen to one another and take mutual responsibility for one another?
- When translating the Haggadah, the “*tam*” child is often translated as the “simple” one. Tamar's family understands this child not as simple, but as “faithful,” and the most important child. How does this translation change your sense of the *tam* and its role at the seder?

# My Mother and Our Family's Exodus from Africa

Ziva (Tezezew) Mekonen Degu

“And you shall explain to your child on that day, ‘It is because of what God did for me when I went free from Egypt.’”  
(Exodus 13:8)

At an Ethiopian Passover seder (*kurban*), the Qes (the Beta Israel rabbi) tells his son about the biblical trek from Africa, that is, from Egypt, to the land of Israel, from slavery to freedom. But in our family, it is on Israel's Independence Day, Yom HaAtzmaut, that my mother, Tru Work Adane, retells the tale of our family's trek from Ethiopia to Sudan and then to Israel in 1984.

I was twelve when we began to organize our illegal flight from the communist dictatorship in Ethiopia through Sudan to Israel. My mother started the trek with six of her children, her mother, and members of our extended family, but without our father (who joined us later in Sudan). This pilgrimage was her personal exodus to freedom: on foot, for hundreds of kilometers, through a parched desert, fulfilling her dream of going up to Jerusalem. The daily march usually began at night, to avoid both the police and the heat.

As we approached the Sudanese border, we were warned to walk quickly and to continue through the whole night. When all the families reached the thick bushes near the border, my mother asked me, “Where are your younger brothers?” They had disappeared. My mother opened her eyes wide in shock, speechless. I remember her standing there, with her hands on her hips, helpless, not knowing what to do, looking back in the direction from which we had come.

Earlier, my older brother had gone out with other young boys to find some water for our whole group. The water was more mud than water, but it saved our lives. My mother used a cloth to strain out the mud and gave us each a drink from my brother's jerry can, but she did not take a drink for herself, saying, “No, this is saved for my other children, [my lost children], not for me!” Then she instructed my oldest brother, “Take grandmother's horse, take this water, and go bring back your brothers.” It grew dark, but my mother still refused to drink or eat anything. I don't remember the exact hour, but my brother arrived with our missing brothers in the middle of the night. My mother lamented, “I almost lost three of my sons!” On the last week of our journey, we lost her niece's three-year-old daughter, Manaale Genetu, and on the last two days, her brother-in-law, forty-year-old Ayelign Avera. Even now, forty years later, we do not know what happened to them.

At the end of this debilitating march and after three more months in refugee camps in Sudan, the Mossad took us to Israel in cargo planes in what was named Operation Moshe. We arrived just one week before Israel's Independence Day. Over time, the evening of Independence Day has become a time to gather with family for a thanksgiving meal and to express our gratitude to the Holy One for uniting us and for the privilege to make *aliyah* in peace. Every year, my mother tells the story of our trek, highlighting how God rescued her children—Yael, Asher, and Uri, as they are now called in Hebrew—and we remember Grandma Wagaye Yitzhak, who started the trek but did not complete it.

Before my eyes, always, are my mother's integrity, faith, and professionalism. I feel that all my accomplishments were earned by her merit.



Image by Aliza Urbach, “Exodus of Ethiopian Jewry” (1991).

## Questions for Conversation

- This excerpt describes one family's perilous journey to find safety in the land of Israel. Does your family history include an immigration story?
- Ziva (Tezezew) Mekonen Degu's family has turned their story into a ritualized addition to their Yom HaAtzmaut celebration. How do you think this changes their experience of the holiday or of hearing their own story? Does your family ritualize part of your family history? If so, how? If not, how might you create a ritual retelling of part of your story?

# The Four Children

In the book of Exodus, God instructs the Israelites—and now us—to tell the story of what happened in Egypt to the next generation, even before the Exodus begins. The four children embedded in the Haggadah represent four paradigmatic members of the next generation—one who fully buys into the project of Jewish peoplehood; one who feels exempt from the collective experience; one who engages on a surface level; and one who is unsure how to connect. The Haggadah teaches us that each of these children merits a response.

The questions of how to teach the story of the Exodus and how to understand our audience need to be revisited every year. This supplement includes texts addressing different concerns we may have about the four children today. Noam Zion provides an overall framing for responding to these contemporary children and Eleanor Harrison Bregman describes her own evolution from standing outside the Jewish people to finding a sense of belonging. We also offer three approaches to the oft-maligned wicked child: Donniel Hartman proposes that, in our ability to choose or reject Judaism, we are all wicked children; Sara Labaton urges us to spend less time accusing others of being wicked; and Joshua Ladon and Masua Sagiv encourage us to unpack the wicked child's question and draw them in. In a polarized society with increasing vitriol in public discourse, the four children and particularly the wicked child remind us that we owe it to one another to find ways to communicate across our differences. Now is not the time to write people out of our shared story.

## Contemporary Children

Noam Zion

Today, as in the past, many Jewish families are challenged by generational conflicts about the definition of Jewish identity and Jewish loyalty. Parents' memories and experiences are, by definition, different from their children's memories and experiences; this is the original reason for the Haggadah. It is natural, says the Torah, that children will ask about the significance of the Jewish commitments and rituals central to their parents' and grandparents' worldviews and practices. It is good when both children and parents investigate and understand the gaps between their different perspectives and values.

In the Haggadah, the rabbis imagine four types of children and how a parent might respond to each one. Who is the wise child and what questions do we associate with them? Who, if any of our children, is the *rasha*, understood as wicked or rebellious or, perhaps, courageously critical? When is a child's alienation from their Jewish identity a matter of rebelling against their parents? When is it the product of that child's idealism and their dissatisfaction with the status quo?

## I Belong to the Jewish People

Eleanor Harrison Bregman

After Shabbat dinner on October 6, I turned to our host, a rabbi who is a dear family friend, and said "Can we have a conversation soon? About converting. I've been considering it for over a year, and it feels right on many levels, but I've identified as the 'non-Jew in the room' for so long. Could I actually belong to the Jewish people? Would I ever really feel Jewish in my bones?" Eight days later, a lifetime later, there was time set aside at Shabbat services for beginning to process what had happened on October 7 and I attempted to say something. I tried to say, in so many words, "As someone who does not belong to the Jewish people, I'm with you. I am here for you in this grief. I'm in solidarity with you." As I spoke, however, I stumbled over the word "you." It felt like the most awkward thing to say "you," as if, like the wicked child of the seder, I was saying this happened to you and not to me. It was at that moment I knew in my body and in my heart: I was one of the Jewish people in the room, because this happened to me, too. After nearly 30 years of being part of a Jewish community and after 24 years of marriage to a Jewish man, I knew for sure I belonged to the Jewish people. I converted in March, and so, when I sit at the seder table this year, I will be like the wise child, claiming this heritage as my own.

## Questions for Conversation

The Haggadah encourages a values-based conversation across generations. Try to remember a recent conversation about a complex issue where people were approaching the topic from their own, different, experiences. What experiences informed the various positions people were expressing? What strategies helped people in the conversation communicate despite those differences?

## Questions for Conversation

- Share a moment when you have felt particularly connected to the Jewish people or actively claimed your belonging. What gave you that sense of connection to the Jewish people?
- What do you think is driving the increased interest in conversion since October 7? Have those same factors affected your connection to the Jewish community or Judaism? If not, what has kept you connected?

# A *Rasha* (Wicked Child) Roundtable

## The Wicked Child is All of Us

Donniel Hartman

This section of the Haggadah aims to remind parents that our children are not all the same, and, as we tell our story, we must adapt it to their different sensibilities and abilities. However, the section which purports to heighten parental sensitivity fails drastically, first by designating one child—the one who asks, “What is this worship to you?”—as “wicked,” and then the response it suggests, to “set that child’s teeth on edge.” We can see it as a valuable pedagogical model of what not to do. We also should remember that at the time the Haggadah was first composed, rude questions were threatening and individuals whose loyalty wasn’t guaranteed were a source of fear. If we bring the “wicked” child into our own moment, we can see that their question is a demand for a compelling reason to choose Judaism.

In the modern world, we are blessed with multiple identities that all lay claim to our loyalty. Being Jewish is one of many identities available to us. Today, each one of us is the “wicked child.” If Judaism is to claim our loyalty, it will be because we actively choose it over or alongside others. And we will only choose to do so if the Jewish story welcomes our difficult questions and embraces our differences, and if it is morally, intellectually, culturally, and spiritually compelling. Only then will we, the “wicked ones,” choose Judaism as our home.

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## Instead of Pointing Fingers, Cultivate Humility

Sara Labaton

The Haggadah depicts four caricatures of children, including the *rasha*, the wicked one. But what makes the *rasha* wicked? There is a deliberate vagueness in the text about the *rasha* and his three siblings. The writers of the Haggadah accuse the *rasha* of excluding himself from the Jewish people, because he asks, “What is this worship to you?”, but the same claim could just as easily have been brought against the *chacham*, who asks a strikingly similar question, “What are these testimonies, statutes, and judgments that the Lord our God commanded you?” The characterization of the *rasha* as a wicked child would have been far more convincing if we had been given a catalog of his sins, rather than a nitpicky interpretation. Moreover, while the Haggadah excoriates the *rasha* for excluding himself from the community, he seems to be engaging in conversation about the story and even participates at the seder, which calls into question how much he has actually abandoned the Jewish story and the bonds of peoplehood.

We could read the *rasha*’s question as searching for meaning, intended to stimulate and not provoke. Perhaps we should not be so sure that this child is guilty of the crime of betrayal. Perhaps in this imagined family of four children,

the family members themselves disagree about which child is wicked. The *chacham*, the wise child, though typically praised, is also vulnerable to critique. In Jeremiah 9:22, God proclaims, “Thus said God: Let not the wise glory in their wisdom; Let not the strong glory in their strength; Let not the rich glory in their riches.” Like strength and wealth, wisdom is a commodity, and the person who possesses it can fall into hubris.

The Haggadah calls our attention to the temptation to sit around the table and pass judgment on one another, particularly when the company is diverse or in the midst of crisis. The scene depicted here reminds us that sitting together is hard. And yet, as we look at each other across the rowdy finger-pointing table and recite the story of God’s liberation of the Children of Israel, we have an opportunity to cultivate humility. We may be certain we are wise, good, and faithful and not *rasha*, but only God knows for sure. As it says in Jeremiah 9:23: “But only in this should one glory: In being earnestly devoted to Me. For I, God, act with kindness, justice, and equity in the world; For in these I delight—declares God.”

# Bring the Wicked Child Close

Joshua Ladon and Masua Sagiv

What is it about the wicked child's question that needles us so much?

A great question illuminates a path we had not previously considered. Questions, according to twentieth century French philosopher, Maurice Blanchot, are intentionally incomplete speech. Even when we respond with an answer, all the other possible answers remain hovering, just out of reach.

The wicked child's question comes when we are at our most beleaguered. In the months since October 7, many of us have become defensive and armored, even against our own families and friends. And then, when we are telling our story so that our children will see themselves as the inheritors of our tale and contributors to our story, we get eye rolls, side comments, disdain both soft and loud. That one word—*lachem*, to you—makes us snap, even when the question seems so similar to that of the wise child. In this moment, we demand sincerity and connection. Just be with us, tonight, in this exodus from Egypt!

Was this child already wicked or is it their question that makes them so?

Some children do choose to remove themselves from our collective story. It is possible that the wicked child exempted themselves from our people as the Haggadah suggests. It is also possible they did not, but our answers, both our words and our frustration, showed them the door.

We may answer the wicked child forcefully, but the ghosts of other, gentler answers remain. This is only one moment in a collection of moments when we pull our children into the story. Maybe instead of blunting their teeth, we would be better off drawing this child close.

## Questions for Conversation

- Which of these approaches to understanding the wicked child do you find compelling?
- How do you interpret the character of the *rasha*? Do you think this child is wicked? Why or why not?
- If you were writing the Haggadah, how would you have scripted a response to the wicked child's question?

# פירוש: Pour Out Your Wrath and Your Love

Toward the end of the seder, after a night of joyfully telling the story of our ancestors' redemption from enslavement and praising God's powerful intervention, we invite Elijah the prophet to enter our homes, hoping that we, too, will experience redemption through the arrival of the Messiah. Right after opening the door and declaring our faith in the Messiah's coming, though, it is traditional to recite "Pour Out Your Wrath," a compilation of biblical texts demanding that God show up for us in our moments of suffering and persecution, just as God showed up for the ancient Israelites. For many modern Jews, this piece of the seder feels uncomfortably violent and angry. For others, it provides an outlet for expressing very real fears and a yearning for Divine protection. As you consider the message of "Pour Out Your Wrath," how are you relating to it this year? To supplement this part of the seder for 2024, we have included three pieces that tackle this question. The first, "A Vow," by the poet Avraham Shlonsky, was written in 1943 and describes his commitment to hold onto the anger generated by the horrors of the Holocaust. The second and third pieces urge us to seek out and lift up allies and allyship: one is an excerpt from a speech at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on October 25, 2023 by Rachel Goldberg, mother of hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin, and the second, "Pour Out Your Love," was found in a manuscript from Worms, Germany from 1521 and is attributed to the descendants of Rashi, though contemporary scholars debate this.

## A Companion to "Pour Out Your Wrath"

### Mishael Zion

The Israeli poet Avraham Shlonsky composed "A Vow" for Passover 1943 after reading early reports about the Nazi extermination of European Jewry. Its Hebrew name, "*Neder*," echoes the Kol Nidrei ceremony promulgating the official forgiveness of all unfulfilled vows before Yom Kippur. In the case of the Holocaust, however, the poet writes that he refuses to be absolved of his vow to remember, and he pledges his eternal righteous indignation, lest we forget and lest we learn nothing from our experience with genocide.

Shlonsky's poem is quoted in the Haggadah of Kibbutz Nahal Oz from 1956 immediately after the text, "Pour Out Your Wrath." Next to the poem is a handmade drawing of an olive branch and a sword. Sixty-seven years later, on October 7, 2023, many of the kibbutz members, including several of the original founders, were murdered, while many others were abducted to Gaza as hostages by Hamas.

## A Vow

### Avraham Shlonsky (Translated by Mishael Zion)

*By my eyes that witnessed the slaughter  
By my heart that was weighed down by cries for justice*

*By my compassion that taught me to pardon  
Until the days came that were too terrible to forgive,*

*I have sworn: To remember it all,  
To remember—to forget nothing!  
Forget not one thing to the last generation  
Until my indignation shall be extinguished  
When the staff of my moral rebuke has struck until exhausted.*

*A vow: Lest for nothing shall the night of terror have passed.  
A vow: Lest for nothing shall I return to my wont  
Without having learned anything, even this time.*

## Questions for Conversation

- Why do you think the members of Kibbutz Nahal Oz included "A Vow" in their Haggadah next to "Pour Out Your Wrath"? How do the two pieces inform one another?
- What is your relationship to the anger in the poem and in "Pour Out Your Wrath"? Is it different this year than in previous years?

# Hatred is Easy

Rachel Goldberg

So here I live. In a different universe than all of you. You are right here. We seem like we live in the same place. But I, like all of the mothers, and all of the fathers, and wives, and husbands, and children, and brothers, and sisters and loved ones of the stolen—we all actually live on a different planet. Our planet of no sleep, our planet of despair, our planet of tears.

And the hatred being showered on Israel now.... I keep being asked about that. First, in an article I read by Nicholas Kristof, it was so eloquently stated that if you only get outraged when one side's babies are killed, then your moral compass is broken. And your humanity is broken. And therefore, in your quiet moments alone, all of us, everywhere on planet earth need to really ask ourselves, "Do I aspire to be human, or am I swept up in the enticing and delicious world of hatred?"

This is not a phenomenon unique to Israel or Gaza, this is everywhere on our planet. I understand that hatred of "the other," however we decide that "other" to be, is seductive, sensuous, and, most importantly, hatred is easy. But hatred is not actually helpful nor is it constructive.

In a competition of pain, there is never a winner.

One thing gave me a whisper of hope from all the horror on October 7: one of the witnesses with whom I spoke told me that when the rocket fire first began, and all those young music loving hippies went running into the bomb shelter, a Bedouin man who was a guard at the kibbutz across the street also ran inside for cover. As Hamas closed in on the bomb shelter, this man told the young people, "Stay quiet and let me go out to talk to them." He went out and in Arabic said, "I'm a Muslim. Everyone inside is my family, we are Muslim. You don't have to search in there." He tried to save them. He could have just said, "I am a Muslim" and just saved himself, but he tried to do the right thing even though it was terrifying and even though it required unimaginable courage. He was brutally beaten, and the witnesses do not know what his fate was. But I take comfort, even for a fleeting moment, knowing there was someone trying to do the right thing, even when everything in the universe had turned upside down.

We human beings have been blessed with the gift of intellect, creativity, insight, and perception. Why are we not using it to solve global conflicts all over our world? Because doing this is hard and it takes fortitude, imagination, grit, risk, and hope. So instead, we opt for hatred because it is so comfortable, familiar and it is so very, very easy.

## Pour Out Your Love

Translated by Noam Zion and David Dishon

in *A Different Night*

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.

שְׁפוּךְ אֶהְבֵתְךָ עַל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּךָ וְעַל מַמְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ קוֹ-  
רְאִים בְּגִלְלַת חֲסָדִים שֶׁהֵם עוֹשִׂים עִם יַעֲקֹב וּמְגִינִים עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מִפְּנֵי אוֹכְלֵיהֶם. יִזְכּוּ לְרֵאוֹת בְּסִפְתָּ בְּחִירֶיךָ וּלְשִׁמוּחַ בְּשִׁמְחַת גּוֹיְךָ.

## Questions for Conversation

- What do you think about Rachel Goldberg's claim that hatred is comfortable and easy?
- Both Rachel Goldberg and the author of "Pour Out Your Love" call on us to lift up our allies and those who support us. In what ways do you find this charge intuitive? In what ways is it difficult?
- Share a story about an act of allyship that has moved you this year.



# הלל: Praising God When our People are Captives

During the seder and on each day of Passover, we chant and sing the psalms of Hallel, verses of praise. One section of Hallel calls on us to praise God, “For God is good and God’s steadfast love is eternal! Thus let the redeemed of the Lord say, those God redeemed from adversity” (Psalm 107:1-2). With so many still held captive in Gaza, this declaration may be particularly hard to recite this year.

Our celebration of ancient redemption is weighed down with grief not only over the captives but over all that has been lost. But in addition to its moments of celebration, Hallel is also an expression of hope for a Divine response. The psalms of Hallel remind us that we can pray “from the narrow place” and hope that soon, “God [will] answer with abundance” (Psalm 118:5). Below we have included two additions to the seder that span both poles: the joy of a family reunited and a prayer for the strength to keep hoping for redemption.

## What Blessing Do You Say When You Suddenly Get Your Life Back?

Jacky Levy

“The kids have returned!” That is all we can mumble.

While our family is usually very verbal, during this long period when the children were in captivity, everything had shrunk to a few isolated words of hope: “They will come back!” For two months, our inability to speak threw us into the arms of old songs and biblical verses, the Israeli musical feed, and the childhood heritage of our Judaism. Every classic line, every verse, and every word revealed itself anew. Suddenly they were charged with relevance as if they had been written just for this moment.

Ever since we finally saw the faces of the children of Kibbutz Nir Oz, and among them, our family members, Sahar and Erez, the words from the opening of the Psalm recited on Passover: “Praise God! For God is good and God’s steadfast love is eternal!” have been coursing through my heart. “Thus let the redeemed of the Lord say, those God redeemed from adversity” (Psalm 107:1-2).

How often have I recited these well-worn festive words, without taking the time to think about how those redeemed really feel? What does a human being feel and say when he is granted his life anew after having been held hostage in the hands of his enemy? After loved ones have spent days, weeks, or months in a place where their lives are not worth a cent, suddenly the time for a hug arrives—the very opposite of the clutches of “the enemy’s hands.” Apparently, one should say, “Praise God! For God is good and God’s steadfast love is eternal!”

Even though, in this leftwing Zionist family of *kibbutzniks*, I am almost the only one who prays and feels at home among these ancient verses, something like “Praise God!” is exactly what the children’s mother, Hadas, said. She said these words after she was told that they had been liberated and after she roared like a lioness who had just rescued her cubs from the teeth of the jackals. After Hadas stretched up her arms to the heavens (arms that I think have of late become elongated by ten centimeters), she said, “Yes, there is a God!” That is just an updated version of saying “Praise God! For God is good!”

## Questions for Conversation

- As you read the verses of Hallel, including the verses about the redeemed captives, are there ways in which these ancient verses resonate differently this year or feel hollow?
- How do you navigate moments when our liturgy or rituals do not align with how you are experiencing the world? How are you framing these texts for yourself and those at the seder with you this year?

## Questions for Conversation

- Jacky Levy’s essay powerfully expresses one family’s experience of Jewish liturgy brought to life as a mother was reunited with her kidnapped children. Have you ever experienced a moment like this, of prayer brought to life?
- While Hadas was reunited with her children, their father, Ofer, was not released in the hostage exchanges. How do we sit with the reality of an incomplete redemption?

# To Hold Onto Hope Without Letting Go

Oded Mazor (Translated by Ayelet Cohen and adapted by Noam Zion)

Oded Mazor recited this prayer at a demonstration for the release of captives in Jerusalem in 2023.

*“For everything there is a season ... under Heaven...  
A time for weeping and a time for laughing,  
A time for mourning and a time for dancing ...  
A time for war and a time for peace. ” (Ecclesiastes 3: 1,4,8)  
In those days when each time collapses into the next  
We have no choice but to cry and to laugh with the same eyes  
To mourn and to dance at the same time  
And the long arc of history is compressed into one day and one hour.  
We ask for the strength to contain  
The intensity of our bursting hearts,  
To rejoice with those who are fortunate to embrace today,  
To enfold all of those withdrawing into their longing, their souls trembling,  
To hold onto hope without letting go,  
And to leave some quiet space for a silent scream.  
Please, grant us the room to shatter into pieces,  
And the spirit to be rebuilt anew.*

## Questions for Conversation

- In this poetic prayer, Oded Mazor reminds us that life is not quite as simple as Ecclesiastes describes. Instead, we often feel many emotions at once. What gives you strength in those moments?
- Here, Oded describes a quiet space for a silent scream. How do you release your built up emotions?

# נִרְצָה: Next Year in Jerusalem—Messages of Hope

After an evening full of conversation about persecution and redemption, joyful singing, and delicious food, we close the seder with the ultimate Jewish expression of hope: to be able to celebrate Passover next year with the entirety of the Jewish people in Jerusalem. The Haggadah reads: *Leshana haba'ah beyerushalayim*, “Next year in Jerusalem.” For this year’s seder, we have included additional texts and images about hope: a piece on the nature of hope in the Jewish story, the words of “*Hatikva*” (Israel’s national anthem), and a poem about holding onto hope in the wake of October 7 and the ongoing war.

## Tikvah/Hope: The Enclave of Freedom in the Human Soul

David Grossman

Hope, I thought, over and over again, trying to awaken it inside me. I called to it, out loud, in Hebrew even, perhaps it speaks Hebrew: “*Tikvah! Tikvah!*” I thought about Israel’s national anthem, which is called “*Hatikvah*,” “The Hope,” and speaks of the hope held by Jews for two thousand years in exile, the hope of one day being able to live in their own country. It was a hope that often kept them alive.

Hope is a noun, but it contains a verb that propels it into the future, always to the future, always with forward motion. One could look at hope as a sort of anchor cast from a stifled, desperate existence towards a better, freer future. Towards a reality that does not yet exist, which is made up mostly of wishes, of imagination. When the anchor is cast, it holds on to the future, and human beings, and sometimes an entire society, begin to pull themselves towards it.

It is an act of optimism. When we cast this imaginary anchor beyond the concrete, arbitrary circumstances. When we dare to hope, we are proving that there is still one place in our soul where we are free. A place that no one has been able to suppress. And thanks to this anchor of fearlessness, of freedom, in the souls of those who have hope, they know what the reality of freedom looks like. They also know how crucial it is to fight for it.

## Hatikvah

“*Hatikvah*,” Israel’s national anthem, literally means “the hope.” The lyrics were written by nineteenth century poet, Naphtali Herz Imber.

כל עוד בלִבֵּב פְּנִימָה	<i>As long as within our hearts</i>
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמִיָּה,	<i>The Jewish soul sings,</i>
וּלְפָאַתִּי מִזְרָח, קְדִימָה	<i>As long as forward to the East</i>
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפֶיָה,	<i>To Zion, looks the eye –</i>
עוֹד לֹא אָבְדָה תְּקוּתָנוּ,	<i>Our hope is not yet lost,</i>
הַתְּקוּהָ בֵּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים,	<i>It is two thousand years old,</i>
לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ	<i>To be a free people in our land</i>
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.	<i>The land of Zion and Jerusalem.</i>

## Questions for Conversation

- David Grossman describes the hope embedded in “*Hatikva*” as something that kept Jews alive for two thousand years of exile. As you gather for your seder this year, how would you describe your relationship to hope?
- In what ways does hope feel elusive? In what ways does it feel like an important act of optimism?

# For Weeks I've Been Bleeding Poems

Iris Eliya Cohen (Translated by Jonathan Paradise)

אָני קוראת לַקֶּבֶץ "גּוֹן"	<i>I name the file "sorrow"</i>
מוחקת	<i>I delete</i>
קוראת לו "אוקטובר"	<i>Name it "October"</i>
מְשַׁנֶּה לְ"שִׁבְעָה"	<i>Change it to "7"</i>
מחליפה לְ"תְהוֹם"	<i>Replace it with "chasm"</i>
מְשַׁנֶּה: "תְּהוֹמוֹת"	<i>Change: "chasms"</i>
קוראת לו "כְּשֶׂאוֹל"	<i>Name it "hell-like"</i>
קוראת לו "תְּקוּהָ"	<i>I name it "hope"</i>
מורה למחשב שִׁיזְכֹּר	<i>Command the computer to remember</i>
הוא עונה לי "שומר את תקוה"	<i>It responds, "saving hope."</i>

## Questions for Conversation

- If you were going to create a file on your computer for the last six months, what would you call it?
- What do you hope to name the file for the next six months?

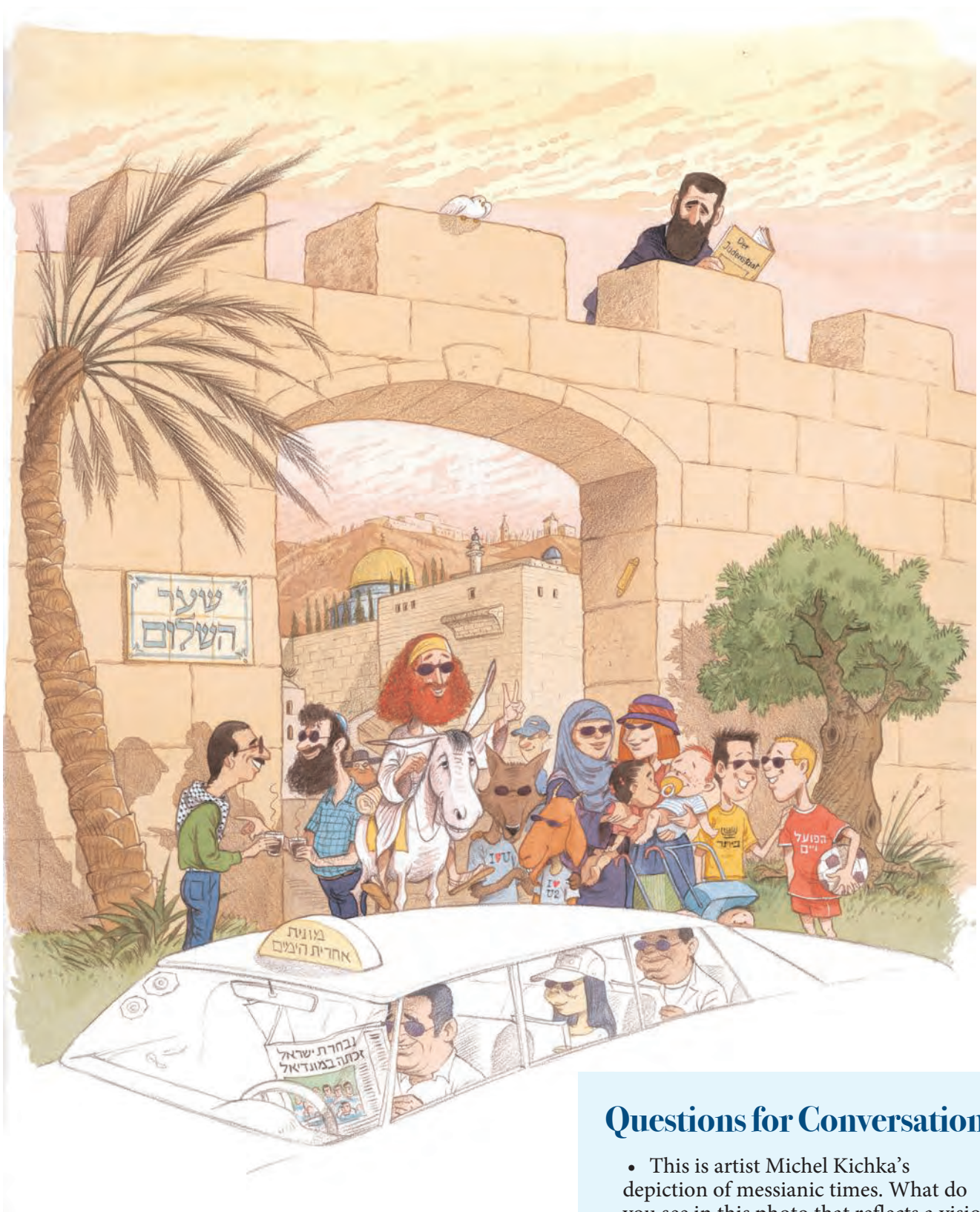


Illustration by Michel Kichka, "Tomorrow's Jerusalem: Revised and Revisited" from *A Night to Remember, the Haggadah of Contemporary Voices* (2007).

## Questions for Conversation

- This is artist Michel Kichka's depiction of messianic times. What do you see in this photo that reflects a vision of a better time?
- What or who is missing from this picture? What else does your vision of an ideal future include?