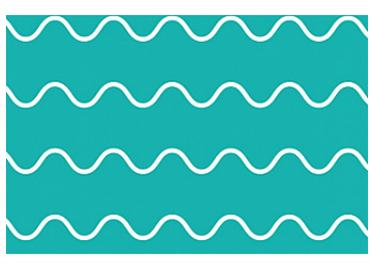


# Religious Action Center's Haggadah

By Religious Action Center



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## Introduction

### SOCIAL ACTION CONNECTIONS AT THE SEDER TABLE

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

In the Book of Exodus, we are taught how to observe the annual festival of Passover. We

retell the story of our enslavement and subsequent redemption as an integral part of the

observance. Torah commands us to teach our children, “it is because of what God did for

me when I went forth from Egypt,” creating an immediate connection between the text

and our lives today.

Like many of the Jewish holidays, Passover is observed primarily in the home. During

the Seder, we do not rely on clergy or other synagogue leaders to shape the holiday for us

– we create the holiday experience ourselves. To that end, many different Hagadot have

been developed over the years to reflect the interests of different participants and also to

speak to various populations or issues.

Generally, each Hagadah includes the same basic Seder format, including the teachings

about the matzah, maror (bitter herbs), and pesach (the shank bone). The other items on

the Seder plate are also explained. We learn about the four cups of wine, the four

children, and recite the four questions. We discuss and commemorate the ten plagues. We

open the door for Elijah the Prophet. We sing songs of redemption, praise, and thanks.

Yet, the way each family interprets and expands upon each section of the Haggadah can

vary greatly.

Within the Haggadah, there are many opportunities to add additional readings or

elaborate on the social action themes already present. Many of today's themed Haggadot

contain similar points during the Seder at which creative interpretations are appropriate.

The following are some of the most common opportunities, for home or synagogue use,

together, and press the tabs into the inside of their connecting sides.

8. Let dry. Take home and place on your Seder table. Pick a point in the

Seder to say the prayer (found on the Template) on your centerpiece (a good spot would be right before the four questions). Ask the adults at the table "Do you think slavery exists today?" See if they know! Tell them million people are enslaved today. Tell them we can do something about it – just visit [abolish.com](http://abolish.com) to find out!

slavery (with the aid of the curriculum material at

[www.iabolish.com/passover](http://www.iabolish.com/passover)).

3. Cut out the templates on the solid lines only, not the dashed lines. Two templates will result, one rectangular and the other rectangular with tabs.

4. Fold the two templates on all of their dashed lines and make creases. Then lay flat again.

5. Now it's time to design how you want your centerpiece to look. You can use the photos provided as well as words and pictures of your own creation. To use the photos provided, cut out the pictures that you would like to use and glue them on the templates, within the lined squares. Be careful not to use too much glue so that it gets messy – use just enough for the photos to stick to the template.

6. Write and decorate other parts of your centerpiece as you see fit – perhaps

you can write your own prayer, or boldly draw the phrase "Let My People Go" or sketch the word "slavery" inside a circle with a line through it.

7. When you are done decorating, refold the tabs on their dashed lines and glue them lightly. Then fold both templates into their box shapes, fit them

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## Kadesh A Fifth Cup

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)  
Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

Some *Haggadot* include a "fifth" cup in the Seder as an opportunity for additional readings or prayers. This tradition dates back to the early rabbis and commentators, including Alfasi and Maimonides, who discussed this possible addition to the Seder.

A Fifth Cup enables us to call attention to a current social justice issue or recognize a recent victory with regards to a prior injustice. This fifth cup could be passed around the table and filled with coins to be donated to tzedakah. An additional reading with specific hopes or social action goals (like a renewed focus on the homeless or implementation of a new, long-term tzedakah project) for the coming months can be included at this point.

As wine can serve as a symbol of abundance and luxury, the fifth cup is a perfect opportunity for a discussion on privilege and poverty: Some Jews experience a high degree of privilege. Others are less privileged. A recent study points to 100,000 Jews living below the poverty line in New York City. What are the sources of our privilege? Has your family's economic status changed over the last few generations? In what ways? What does it mean to experience the *Haggadah* from a place of privilege? From a place of poverty? All are invited to tell a short story of an ancestor who faced economic hardship, or came up against an economic system that did not acknowledge their humanity.

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## Yachatz

### Ha Lachma Anya/ This is the Bread of Affliction

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Religious Action Center: Pesach, A Season for Justice

This reading takes place near the beginning of the Seder in the *yachatz* section. It provides the primary textual inspiration for feeding the hungry during Passover, as well as calling for an end to slavery, which continues to exist around the world in various forms. It also prompts us to join together with members of the African American community for communal Seders recognizing our common experience of slavery. This passage inspires many of the social justice programs created around the observance of Passover:

#### Ha Lachma Anya

*This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread,  
which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.*

*Let all who are hungry come and eat.*

*Let all who are in want, share the hope of Passover.*

*As we celebrate here, we join with our people everywhere.*

*This year we celebrate here.*

*Next year in the land of Israel.*

*Now we are still in bonds.*

*Next year may we all be free.*

#### Additional Readings:

##### The Matzah of Unity

*by the United Jewish Communities Rabbinic Cabinet*

Passover is the great Jewish family holiday – but with a critical message about our ethics and values.

We eat the Karpas, the green vegetable – and recall our concern for the environment.

We dip into the salt water of tears – and remind ourselves to care for the oppressed.

We eat the bitter herbs – and sharpen our concern for the stranger.

We taste the matzah, the bread of affliction – and feel the memories of our

## Commentary / Readings

### Modern-Day Slavery Art Project

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

**The Anti-Slavery Seder Centerpiece (Grades 3-6):** Religious School teachers can use the story of Passover to teach about modern manifestations of slavery and discuss the need for

awareness. This age-appropriate activity, in addition to others available at the [www.iabolish.com](http://www.iabolish.com) website, will help children teach their parents about this critical issue:

#### Materials needed for each student:

Scissors

Glue stick (or other Elmer's)

A copy of the “templates” page (available at [www.iabolish.com/passover/center-template.htm](http://www.iabolish.com/passover/center-template.htm))

A copy of the “photos” page (available at [www.iabolish.com/passover/centerpiecephoto1.htm](http://www.iabolish.com/passover/centerpiecephoto1.htm))

Markers or other decorating supplies

1. Photocopy the “templates” and the “photos” pages so that you have one copy for each student in the class (plus a few spares).
2. Discuss modern slavery, Passover and the Jewish obligation to stop

into our people, recognizing their potential to make a difference. We open the door. We welcome Elijah, girls and boys, women and men. Together, we realize potential. (Lisa S. Greene)

servitude to Pharaoh. We note the roasted egg, symbolic of the extra offering in the Temple in ancient days – and ask ourselves what are our own sacrifices?

Passover is so real and tangible, because we not only taste our freedom, but we also resolve to work for the liberation of all people. It is a time to ask ourselves: what are we doing to care for those in need? Can we reach out and assist with our tzedakah, our charitable contributions, or through our acts of loving-kindness?

Let us now take the middle matzah and divide it in half. As we break this matzah and set it aside, we link ourselves symbolically with all Jews throughout the world, especially those who have lived under the heel of the oppressor.

Our Seder meal will not conclude until the missing piece of Matzah is found and returned to the table. The Matzah, when restored, shows the desire of our people to be together as one, at peace. As Jews, we are a people of sacred fragments; we need help from God to bond together in everlasting unity.

Today the Star of David rises proudly in the former Soviet Union. Yet hundreds of thousands of elderly Jews struggle to survive. In Argentina, families, schools, community centers and synagogues face a difficult economic crisis and we provide basic services and supplies for tens of thousands of our fellow Jews.

Jews who left Ethiopia and other devastated countries experienced a modern exodus to live in freedom. They brought their children and grandchildren to Israel, a land sworn to us by our ancestors and God. Now we are committed to helping them to become full participants in all aspects of Israeli society.

But our work is not done. We need boundless love for the Jewish people in order to continue our efforts at caring for the most vulnerable, supporting Jewish education, ingathering of the exiles and to rebuilding Israel. May this Passover be a time of recommitment to our people and our faith.

### **Affliction Beyond Hunger**

*by Jews for Racial and Economic Justice*

In our city today, some of our neighbors are forced to work in order to receive their meager welfare benefits, which barely enable them to survive. Tonight we share their bread of affliction:

The affliction of work without dignity  
The injustice of no minimum wage  
The theft of protection from injury  
The anxiety of work with no future  
Panic at the threat of lost benefits.  
The stress of leaving a child for work  
The shame of forced placement  
The death of educational opportunity  
The robbery of the right to organize  
Silenced voices of protest.

Who speaks aloud alongside those whose speech has been muted?  
Who breathes together with those who cannot catch their breath?  
We can breathe the breath of life, we can join these struggles, we can face the Pharaohs and strip them of their power.

#### **Ha Lachma Anya Supplement**

*by Rabbi Arthur Waskow*

In the world today there are still some who are so pressed-down that they have not even this bread of oppression to eat. There are so many who are hungry that they cannot all come and eat with us tonight. Therefore we say to them, we set aside this bread as a token that we owe you righteousness, *tzedakah*, and that we will fulfill it. (Set aside one piece of matzah.) And to ourselves we say, not by bread alone, but by everything that is brought forth by the mouth of YHWH, lives the human; share your bread with the hungry, says YHWH. As the tradition says,

"Ha-sha-tah ha-kha; I-sha-nah ha-ba-ah b'ar-ah d'yis'ra'el,"

This year we celebrate here, but the next year we hope to celebrate in the land of Israel, the land of God-wrestling.

#### **The Fourth Piece of Matzah**

*by Rabbi Joel Soffin*

## **Bareich**

### **Cup of Elijah**

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

This section of the *Haggadah* focuses on our hopes for the peace and redemption of messianic times, while also reminding us of what we can do *l'taken et haolam, to repair the world in our own time*. By way of example, North Shore Congregation Israel of Glencoe, IL's Women's Seder includes the following passage to be read while opening the door for Elijah. This reading reminds us that there are still injustices based on gender, and that we must continue to fight for equality in the Jewish community, in the workplace, economically and in society between men and women:

Elijah, we are told,

Will precede the Messiah.

He will be a sign to us.

And so we welcome Elijah

At the end of Shabbat,

A taste of the ideal, the messianic.

We pray, we sing.

At the Seder we even open the door.

At a *bris* we welcome a baby boy into the covenant. There we place a chair for Elijah, reminding us that each child born bears the potential...could make the difference...could be the Messiah.

But some would say that the Messiah will truly come when we welcome our daughters into the covenant with Elijah's chair present, bringing them

## Motzi-Matzah

### Fourth Piece of Matzah

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

To highlight the continuing existence of slavery, spiritual

leaders and families may use the following original prayer, written Rabbi Joel Soffin of Temple Shalom in Succasunna, NJ, while holding up a fourth piece of matzah:

"We raise this fourth matzah to remind ourselves that slavery still exists, that people are still being bought and sold as property, that the Divine image within them is yet being denied. We make room at our Seder table and in our hearts for those in southern Sudan and in Mauritania who are now where we have been.

We have known such treatment in our own history. Like the women

and children enslaved in Sudan today, we have suffered while others stood by and pretended not to see, not to know. We have eaten the bitter herb; we have been taken from our families and brutalized. We have

experienced the horror of being forcibly converted. In the end, we have come to know in our very being that none can be free until all are free.

And so, we commit and recommend ourselves to work for the freedom of these people. May the taste of this 'bread of affliction' remain in our mouths until they can eat in peace and security. Knowing that all people are Yours, O God, we will urge our government and all governments to do as You once commanded Pharaoh on our behalf: 'Shalach et Ami! Let MY People Go!'"

While holding up a fourth piece of matzah, recite the following:

"We raise this fourth matzah to remind ourselves that slavery still exists, that people are still being bought and sold as property, that the Divine image within them is yet being denied. We make room at our Seder table and in our hearts for those in southern Sudan and in Mauritania who are now where we have been.

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And so, we commit and recommend ourselves to work for the freedom of these people. May the taste of this 'bread of affliction' remain in our mouths until they can eat in peace and security. Knowing that all people are Yours, O God, we will urge our government and all governments to do as You once commanded Pharaoh on our behalf: 'Shalach et Ami! Let MY People Go!'"

# Maggid - Beginning

## Ten Plagues

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

As we recite the plagues, we pour out ten drops of wine, lessening our joy, to remember the plagues set upon Egypt. In today's world, there are many societal cruelties and injustices that can cause us to diminish our joy. Many Haggadot contain listings of modern day plagues, such as AIDS, breast cancer, child poverty, domestic violence, environmental destruction, homelessness, homophobia, hunger, illiteracy, and racism. Families can discuss their "top ten" societal ills and discuss ways we can work to prevent them. Consider the following reading from A Common Road to Freedom, A

Passover Haggadah for a Seder conducted with both Jews and African Americans: Each drop of wine is our hope and prayer that people will cast out the plagues that today threaten everyone, everywhere they are found, beginning in our own hearts:

The making of war,

The teaching of hate and violence,

Despoliation of the earth,

Perversion of justice and government,

Fomenting of vice and crime,

Neglect of human needs,

Oppression of nations and peoples,

Corruption of culture,

Subjugation of science, learning, and human discourse,

The erosion of freedoms.