

PASSOVER 2024

AN INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SEDER GUIDE

LIGHT IN THE PRESENT

Why is this seder different from all other seders? And why is it the same? October 7 and the ensuing war, mark the beginning of a new chapter in the unique and ongoing story of the Jewish People. Jews around the world are navigating an unknown and painful period affecting our sense of security, community, and identity.

At a time when everything feels different, we will, once again, gather with friends and families, just like every generation before us, to tell the Passover story. In this retelling of the quintessential Jewish narrative lies an opportunity to uplift ourselves and our families. The story of Exodus articulates who we are, where we come from, and where we aim to go. It is in this story that we find the values, set of priorities, rituals, and practices that guide us in our highs and lows. It is in this story where we find the necessary resilience that brings about clarity and builds hope.

In this spirit, parents, grandparents, community leaders, and Passover seder narrators are invited to lead their family and friends through this year's intergenerational family seder. The following guide is meant to infuse personal family narratives into the Passover seder as an exercise in finding the hope and building the resilience we all need to bring about next year in Jerusalem.

WHY FAMILY STORIES

Family identity is grounded in the stories we tell about ourselves. Especially in challenging times, telling a fundamental story about who we are and where we come from helps create meaning and resilience. This is an inherently hopeful practice by placing us as part of a larger unfolding story which connects us to our families and our history.

Family stories allow everyone to show and speak up. The Passover seder flows between the individual, "Hotzetei," הוצאתי, I was brought out, and the collective "Avadeem Hayinu, עבדים היינו, we were slaves. Our personal narratives lead us towards the greater story of the Jewish people. Consider opening the seder by asking guests, "How did you come to be here?"

Family stories and traditions provide comfort. Post OCTOBER 7, when we feel far less safe and secure, rituals provide a unique sense of familiarity and comfort; they give us literal seder, order, that provides collective meaning and confidence.

Through family stories, children develop a sense of their multi-generational self, the personal strength, moral clarity and resilience that come along with it. In dark periods, they can call on that expanded sense of self to pull themselves towards the light. By seeing ourselves as a culmination of all the generations who came before us (the slave and the free Jew which both exist within each of us), we can hold both vulnerability and power as two truths that are embedded within our modern identity.

Family stories allow us to internalize stories that challenge as well as bolster our own. As we tell our story, and, especially, as we listen to others, we create the space to hold seemingly conflicting narratives as true and legitimate perspectives grounded in the same family story.

HOW CAN YOU INCLUDE YOUR OWN FAMILY STORIES IN THE PASSOVER SEDER?

Consider connecting these points in the seder to the following questions:

THE STORIES WE WERE TOLD: WE WERE SLAVES

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ

We were slaves to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. And the Lord, our God, took us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched forearm..."

What was the "Exodus story" you were told about your grandparents? About your parents? And how was this story told? It could be any story which articulates a challenge or struggle; an immigration story, one of sickness, economic hardship, etc.

Is there a particular story that was passed on to you that you thought about on October 7 and beyond? Why and what do you draw from it?

Parents and grandparents can consider sharing memories from their own family seders. Who was at their Passover seder growing up? What was on the table? What stories were told? From there, new memories and associations are born.

THE STORIES WE TELL: AND EVERY GENERATION IS COMMANDED...

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

"In every generation, one must see oneself as if one had personally experienced the Exodus from Egypt."

In reciting the story of the Exodus, every Jew is commanded to contribute new layers worthy of being passed on and shared with and by the next generations. The Jewish people – as individuals, families, and the greater collective – find themselves rapidly narrating a story; every Jew has a story from October 7 and its aftermath.

Consider asking guests:

Where were you on October 7?

How have you reacted since? What have you done? Where are you now in this story?

What will you want to share and pass on about this period?

THE STORIES WE YEARN FOR: NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם

Acknowledging that we are not fully free and that our work, and thus our story, is both eternal and incomplete, the seder ends with a cry of yearning that defines the Jewish experience and sense of self. We yearn, we demand, and we believe in a brighter future for ourselves, our people, and the greater world. In this spirit, ask your guests to articulate what they yearn for:

What are we afraid to hope for that might seem too distant to bring about?

What is in our control in bringing about a brighter future?

As a Jew, what is the world that you imagine for your descendants?

What is a dimension of our seder that you want to ensure is preserved for future generations?

Dr. Robyn Fivush and Dr. Marshall Duke are Emory University psychologists with decades of experience researching the role of narrative in building a child's sense of self and resilience. ANU - Museum of the Jewish People is committed to nurturing a sense of global Jewish identity and belonging in Israel and across the Jewish world, based on the belief that within every Jew is a Jewish story to be shared.

Duke, M. P., Lazarus, A., & Fivush, R. (2008). Knowledge of family history as a clinically useful index of psychological well-being and prognosis: A brief report. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 45(2), 268–272. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.45.2>