WHY IS THIS YEAR DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER YEARS?

Celebrating Passover post October 7

פרדס
PARDES
YOUR TORAH. YOUR JOURNEY.

Passover is a holiday we associate with questions.

Indeed the Seder is choreographed to elicit questions from children and adults alike. As anyone who has spent time in our *Beit Midrash* (Study Hall) knows, great questions propel the study of our texts – revealing new vistas, new voices, and new insights.

And just as we aim to approach every text with renewed curiosity, we believe in the power of facing our current moment in time with renewed compassion and curiosity. To this end, we have asked our faculty to read through the haggadah while holding onto the critical question - **how are we celebrating Passover differently after October 7th?**

The strength of our Pardes community comes not only from our ability to face hard questions, but from our willingness to engage with a multitude of perspectives, even those we may initially disagree with. We can be in dialogue with each other, argue with each other, and learn from each other all in the same breath. In fact, we believe that to do this is a countercultural and critical practice we all must engage in.

In this companion, you will hear a diverse set of faculty provide a varied set of perspectives and approaches to our Seder and to our overarching question. Not all of these perspectives are in agreement with each other, and you might even find that you too disagree with one or two of these pieces yourself.

At the core of our work at Pardes is the value of *Mahloket L'Shem Shamayim* - that it is possible to engage in constructive disagreement for the sake of heaven. By actively listening to and considering viewpoints different from our own, we broaden our perspective and deepen our capacity for empathy. In a world increasingly polarized by echo chambers and confirmation bias, the importance of engaging with opinions that challenge our own cannot be overstated. It is through this process that we not only enrich our own understanding but also contribute to the strength and resilience of our community.

We ask that instead of turning away from an opinion that makes you uncomfortable, you view it as an invitation into a broader conversation, where diverse voices can be heard and valued.

Praying for peace in the land of Israel and for the speedy release of all the hostages.

Rabba Shani Gross,

Senior Director of Education, Pardes North America

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The Seder Plate

Rabbi Jessica Minnen

Rabbi Jessica Minnen is a Faculty Associate Fellow for Pardes North America. She is also the Senior Education Specialist with Momentum and consults with organizations across the country to create, deliver, and scale transformative Jewish learning.

It is an oft-repeated truth of modern Judaism that attending a Passover Seder is an extremely common practice, more so than engaging in any other Jewish ritual. Even among those of us who identify as Jewish and also identify as having "no particular religion" you will find familiarity with — and often ownership of — the Seder plate.

The idea of a plate as a common bond among the Jewish people is a beautiful allusion. We are, after all, not unlike the plates that shape our world. We can be tectonic in our differences, yet opportunities to collaborate can result in seismic change. Like the Seder itself, the word *plate* has ancient Hellenist roots; the Greek *platus* means flat. A plate must be flat enough to hold on to what matters, and unlike a bowl, able to situate a range of objects such that they remain distinct and visible.

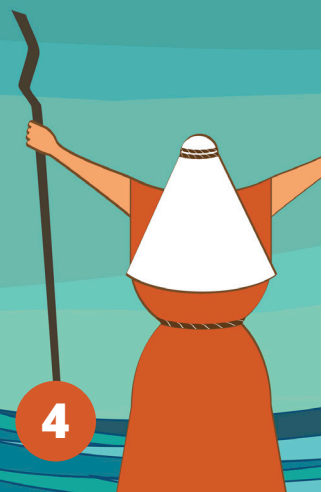
With a green vegetable, bitter herbs, diced fruits combined to form a mortar-like mixture, a shank bone, and an egg, we create a sensory experience of a story — flourishing in Egypt before being enslaved, enduring the bitterness of bondage and back-breaking labor, honoring the paschal (*Pesach*) offering and the *hagigah* (additional holiday) offering, and celebrating the potential of Spring.

Because this is a Seder, order matters. According to the Rema (R. Moses Isserles, a legal decisor of 16th century Poland), in order to avoid passing over a *mitzvah*, we situate the foods in the order they appear in the Seder. Should you place the matzah closer to the leader than the *karpas*, she would have to "pass over" the matzah when reaching for it, and we can't have that. Therefore, the Rema teaches us to place the greens closest to the Seder leader, then the matzah, then the bitter herbs and haroset, and finally the shank bone and egg.

In the 20th century, a new *minhag* emerged, the custom of adding an item to the Seder plate to tell another story — yours. For example, some add a cup of water as a nod to the importance of *Miryam Haneviah* (Miriam the Prophetess) to the Exodus story, or an orange to honor the contribution of women, LGBTQ+, and others to modern Jewish life. In this way the Seder plate becomes an opportunity to engage not only with the experience of our shared past, but with what matters most to you now and to the future you want over the coming year. The Seder plate can be an invitation to grieve, to cope, to protest, or to hope — to face a world still reeling from the events of October 7th.

Maybe you will add a staple to your Seder plate to honor the incredible ways the Jewish people have come together to take action. Perhaps you will put a nail on your Seder plate to represent the work yet to be done to bring every hostage home. You could, like many before you, add an olive to your Seder plate as an aspirational symbol of the peace that so painfully eludes us.

This year, the timeless narrative of redemption will unfold yet again and millions of plates will find their way to the center of tables around the world. What story will yours tell?



Charoset

Professor Deborah Barer

If you have little ones at your Seder table this year, try making this Sephardi charoset recipe. Using only oranges and dried fruit, instead of the traditional Ashkenzai apples and nuts, it is a great option if anyone at your table has nut allergies. It also has a sticky texture that more closely resembles the mortar that charoset is supposed to represent.

After tasting this mixture at the appropriate time in your Seder meal, encourage your children to try using the charoset to build something out of pieces of matzah (or matzah crackers, like Tam Tams). This kind of hands-on activity helps little ones concretize the idea of what the charoset represents. It also gives them something fun to do during the long Seder meal! Can they build a pyramid? A house? A tall tower? How well does the charoset really work as the mortar that keeps their matzah bricks together?

For the adults at the table, I invite you to see the charoset as a challenge this year, to remember to embrace moments of sweetness even in times that feel especially hard or bitter. Sometimes, when the world feels dark, it feels more appropriate to eat maror, to have our bodies experience more fully what is in our hearts. But our bodies also remind us that we are alive, that there are moments of joy even in times of struggle and despair, and that we are commanded to engage with it all. Take this moment in the Seder to taste the sticky sweetness on your tongue, to look at loved ones around the table, and to appreciate the little moments of delight and hope that you can find.

Professor Deborah Barer is a Faculty Associate Fellow for Pardes North America, as well as an Associate Professor of Ancient Judaism at Towson University, where she teaches in the Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies as well as the graduate program in Jewish Studies.

Charoset Recipe

Yield: About 2 cups | Gluten free

From Susan Barocas, via the Washington Post

- 1 large orange
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 cup pitted medjool dates
- Granulated sugar to taste (optional)

1. Wash the orange (you will be using the peel). Cut off the ends of the orange, and the slice into eight sections (including the peel). Remove any seeds.
2. Place the orange sections, raisins, and dates into the bowl of a food processor, and process until you get whatever you think is a mortar-like consistency. The longer you process it, the smoother and more jammy it will become.
3. Taste and add a little sugar if desired.
4. Store in the fridge until ready to use. Ideally, the mixture should be refrigerated for at least one day before serving.

Mah Nishtanah

The Four Questions

Rabba Shani Gross

Rabba Shani Gross is the Senior Director of Education at Pardes North America.

So much of our tradition, from our classic texts, commentaries, and the very ethos of the *Beit Midrash* (Study Hall), centers around questions being offered, challenges being raised and debates being argued. So it is only fitting that here too, at one of the most widely practiced holidays of our people, we unfurl the evening with questions, and in so doing, we mark the purpose of this gathering as a night not only for retelling stories of our past, but as a space to let our curiosity thrive anew.

It might be surprising to discover that the "Four Questions" as we have come to colloquially refer to them, were not always the same questions asked at every Seder table. Indeed, in various preserved versions of the Mishnah and Haggadot of the medieval period, we see the Haggadah open with the "Three Questions," or in some cases even "Five Questions" (as in the case of Miamonide's Yad hachazaka, Chamez umatzah 8:2).

For example, in the eleventh century Parma manuscript[1], the Mishnah in Pesachim 10 is recorded with only the following three questions:

Mishnah in Pesachim 10

Why is this night different from all other nights of the year:

1. On all other nights we dip once, on this night [we dip] twice.

2. On all other nights we eat leavened bread and unleavened bread, on this night [we eat] only unleavened bread.

3. On all other nights we eat meat roasted, broiled and cooked, on this night [we eat] only roast.

פסחים פרק י

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות:

1. שבכל הלילות אנו מטבלים פעם אחת הלילה הזה שתי פעמים

2. שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה כולו מצה

3. שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים בשר צלי שלוק ומבושל הלילה הזה כולו צלי.

1 For a fuller exploration of the different earlier editions of the four questions, read Professor Joseph Tabory's article, *How Many Questions in the "Four Questions"?*

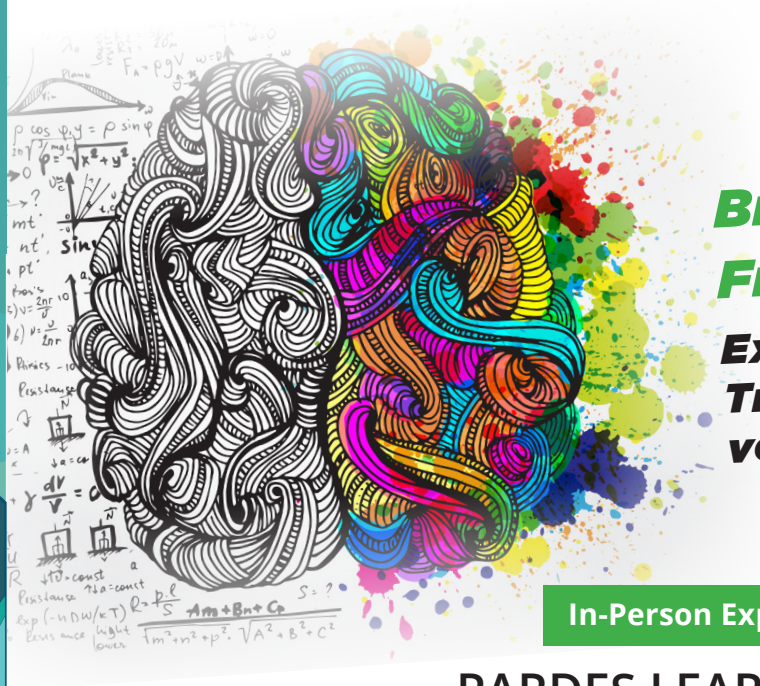
Not only is the quantity of questions in this Mishnah different from our own, but the questions themselves have been changed. Firstly, our two questions relating to Maror (bitter herbs) and leaning at the table are missing entirely. What's more, even the remaining questions that are familiar to us have been altered. In our current version of the question relating to dipping our food, we ask why on this night we dip twice, when on most nights we do not dip our food at all. However in the Parma manuscript of the Mishnah, we are told that "On all other nights we dip once, on this night [we dip] twice." This contrasting version highlights the many different customs around dipping as well as leaning that existed in various cultures where Jews resided where it was more or less common practice, particularly in Israel and Babylon.

What we see from this is that even things like the Four Questions - the questions at the Seder table that we take for granted every year, are not stagnant. They are ever evolving, ever changing to the realities of the present moment the Jewish people find themselves in.

The Seder opens with "What is different this night?" However, this year I want to suggest that like the Parma Haggadah, we alter the question. For it is no longer necessary to ask "what is different." Post October 7th, we as a Jewish people are irrevocably changed.

From that day, and every night that has followed, our lives as Jews have been forever altered. Instead of asking for what has changed, perhaps this Seder is an opportunity for us to reflect on "איך השתנינו הלילה הזה" - how have we changed? How are we entering this Seder differently than that of last year? How are we feeling, speaking, and listening differently? How have our hearts and minds been opened or closed? How do we balance grief with hope?

In this way, we continue to keep this question and our tradition alive, even as we yearn for answers.



Bridging Freedom & Faith:

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The Rabbis of B'nai Brak

Professor Deborah Barer

One of the most striking pieces of the *Haggadah* is that we never actually recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Instead, we talk about *other* people telling the story: namely, the rabbis of B'nai Brak, who stay up all night telling this central narrative of our people's redemption. Failing to tell this compelling story ourselves, with all its vivid and dynamic details, feels like a missed opportunity, especially if you have children at your Seder table. If you're looking for ways to retell the story with your littlest ones and get them engaged, I have written up some ideas here. Acting out parts of the story can also be a great option for younger participants and gives wiggly bodies a chance to move around a little bit during a long ritual meal. If you have younger children at your Seder table, take this opportunity to dive in.

However, by refusing to give us a script for retelling the Passover story, the *Haggadah* offers us instead a kind of gift. By recalling the rabbis in B'nai Brak, the *Haggadah* invites us to reflect on the *experience* of retelling the story, in addition to its content. After all, there are many ways to tell this particular tale. Should we, like the Israelites themselves, rejoice when the Egyptians drown in the sea, exulting in the fact that the wicked get what they deserve (cf. Exodus 15)? Or should we, like God in the midrashic tradition, grieve over this loss of life and potential (cf. Sanhedrin 39b)?

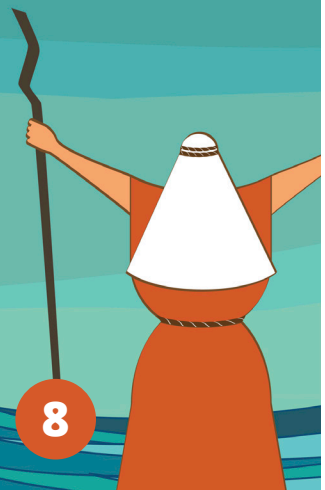
If you have older children or teenagers at your table, invite them to try and come up with a few different ways of telling some piece of the Exodus story. What happens if you tell the story from a different perspective? How does it change? Which version of the story do they like best, and why?

The way we tell the story also affects how it resonates with our own experiences. Many modern *haggadot* draw on contemporary examples of oppression as a lens through which to understand the Israelites' suffering in Egypt. These contemporary connections highlight an important point of tension. As readers, we know the end to the Torah narrative: God saves the people and ultimately leads them to the promised land. But in our own lives, we are in the middle of a different narrative, and we cannot yet know how it will end. What is it like to live *within* the narrative of the Exodus, when redemption is hoped for but not yet realized?

The rabbis of B'nai Brak lived in their own, often difficult reality; they were trying to navigate what it meant to live a Jewish life in a still uncertain world, under foreign rule. What did they see in this story? What did they spend all night discussing? This moment in the *Haggadah* invites us to return to this story, not just year after year, but moment by moment through the Seder experience.

Whoever is sitting at your table, young or old, I invite you to explore how this story resonates with your own life experiences. How have the last several months changed the way that you tell the story of Jewish history and experience? What parts of the Passover narrative do you connect with in a new way? Which pieces no longer make sense to you? How will you tell the story this year?

Professor Deborah Barer is a Faculty Associate Fellow for Pardes North America, as well as an Associate Professor of Ancient Judaism at Towson University, where she teaches in the Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies as well as the graduate program in Jewish Studies.



The Art of Questioning:

The Four Sons

Rabbi Jon Leener

The Seder is the most celebrated Jewish holiday on the calendar. With such large participation, it becomes an opportune educational and religious moment as the Seder is for many their only encounter with Judaism throughout the year. So with all their wisdom, what did the rabbis instruct us at such an auspicious time?

Belief in God? Keeping kosher? Giving charity? Nope. They preached about the importance of asking questions—a truly radical pedagogic decision on their part. Beyond asking why tonight is different from all other nights, the Seder is structured to provoke all sorts of questions, culminating with the "Four Sons".

For many, religion is advertised as a way to gain clarity and provide comfort while a question at its core seeks to disrupt and challenge. For the rabbis though, a question is more valuable than an answer, teaching us to value exploration over discovery. Elie Wiesel echoed the words of the sages by asking, "When will you understand that a beautiful answer is nothing? Nothing more than illusion...because God means movement and not explanation."

What is even more profound is that we instill this value in our children. "To be a Jewish child is to learn how to question," explains Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. "Against cultures that see unquestioning obedience as the ideal behaviour of a child, Jewish tradition, in the Haggadah, regards the 'child who has not learned to ask' as the lowest, not the highest, stage of development" he concludes. The rabbis were insistent that our first memories be of questioning and debating instead of dogma and compliance.

The importance of questioning is reinforced in Jewish learning and spirituality. Abraham, our first patriarch, has the chutzpah to question God's decision-making ability by asking whether God will sweep away the innocent along with the guilty. Moses follows the Abrahamic legacy by asking God why he was chosen to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt. According to some commentators, it was the very fact that he asked this question that made him fit to lead since a question is a true sign of humility as we admit what we don't know or understand.

Finally, the Talmud itself is a book of questions and its entire methodology is based on challenging and raising questions. Its pages are filled with phrases like, "from where do we derive these things?", "what does it teach us?" and most importantly "what is the reason for this?" Nothing can be learned if not challenged, even if it means deconstructing everything in the process. Truth can only be claimed if it can withstand the storm of questions. Indeed, the Seder teaches us that the highest expression of freedom is asking questions. By asking "why?" we take the first step into freedom.

In the wake of October 7th, many unanswered questions linger: Why does tragedy seem so woven into the fabric of Jewish history? Where was God on that day? How does Israel connect to my own Jewish identity? May this Seder be a space for catharsis, where we can all ask, grapple with, and explore these difficult questions without seeking easy answers. This year, perhaps the most important act is the courage to ask the hard questions boldly.

Rabbi Jon Leener is a Faculty Associate Fellow for Pardes North America. He is also the Rabbi of the Prospect Heights Shul in Brooklyn, NY.

V'he She'amda

Rabbi Brent Spodek

Rabbi Brent Chaim Spodek is a Faculty Associate Fellow for Pardes North America. Brent has also been the Rabbi at Beacon Hebrew Alliance since 2010.

One of the many blessings of overcoming a challenge is the memory that stays with us.

We recall the struggle we endured, and also the sense of triumph that comes from overcoming adversity. In the future, when we inevitably face new challenges, we can tell ourselves "We can handle this. We've done it before and we can do it again."

The Passover Seder is an exercise in telling stories about the past so as to shape the present and the future. After all, each and every one of us is called to see ourselves *as if* we ourselves were liberated from slavery in Egypt, though, of course, we who are alive now weren't actually alive back then.

We invite that story to shape our self-understanding and in so doing, we create a lens, an optic, through which we see all future events. It's no accident that the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto began their Uprising on the first night of Passover — as we were liberated *then*, we prayed, so too shall we be liberated *now*.

Within the stories and songs that make up the Seder, there is one little section known as *V'He Sh'Amdah*, which references not only the oppression that we faced in Egypt, but also all the antisemitism that followed. "In every generation," we sing, "they always stand to destroy us, but the Holy One of Blessing rescues us from their hands."

This song reassures us that the Divine Presence is always with us in our suffering - then, now, and always. More than that, in moments that seem the most bleak, this piyyut enables us to sustain the hope that deliverance is at hand.

However, there is a danger embedded in this piyyut as well. When we think in absolutes – as in, "they ***always*** stand to destroy us" – we flatten both "them" and "us" into caricatures stripped of any particulars that might change the outcome, so we are doomed to re-enact the same dynamic again and again and again. The very mindset that reassures us also limits us - *they* do not change, and *we* do not change.

Our Torah gives us another lens, or optic, through which to view our lives. We learn in the book of Proverbs 18:17 that "the first voice in an argument seems right until a second voice appears, and we investigate." Indeed, in moments of tension, that first voice - the voice that says "this conflict is just like every conflict that came before," will likely arise and reassure us - we have survived that *then*, and we will survive this *now*.

But if our goal is not simply survival, but transforming to the conflicts which shape our lives, perhaps we need to make space in our hearts to hear that *second* voice, the one that asks questions. After all, questions are what drives our Seder forward.

Our liturgy holds that the Holy One creates the world anew every single day. Even though it often seems as if we are in the same position we were in yesterday, our tradition says every single day, the world is created anew, with new possibilities. The voice that comforts us also limits us and as we seek to be liberated from both external and internal oppression, perhaps the voice of questions, the voice that is attuned to the unique possibilities of *this* newly created moment, can set us free.

Go Out and Learn

(Tzei U'lmad)

Aviva Lauer

Aviva Lauer is the Chief Education and Educational Training Officer at Pardes, as well as the Gottesman Family Director of the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators.

At my family Seder each year, we talk about the enslavement of our people not only in the ancient past but also in the recent past: how my grandfather was literally a slave in the Hungarian *Munkaszolgálat* (Slave Labor Battalion) from 1941-45, and how my grandmother was taken to Auschwitz, saved from the gas chamber by her age and strength, and was then enslaved at a munitions factory for the remainder of the war.

This year, however, we will be commemorating the attempted annihilation of our people differently. We will focus not only on what Pharaoh or Hitler attempted to do to our people. Instead, we will focus heavily on the destruction that happened this very year. That is still happening to this very day.

Go out and learn what Hamas seeks to do to our people: while Pharaoh only planned to kill our boys and work us to death, Hamas attempts to turn the world against us. To quash our spirit. To break us.

Deuteronomy 26:6, quoted in the Passover

The Egyptians treated us badly and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us.

ספר דברים, כ״ו:ו

וַיָּרֵעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרִים וַיְעַנּוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה:

The 19th-century Lithuanian sage Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (known as the Netziv) notes that linguistically, the opening word וַיָּרֵעוּ should be followed in this verse by לנו, as in, "The Egyptians were very bad to us," and not by אֹתָנוּ, which renders the text illegible, meaning something to the effect of, "The Egyptians were very bad us." The Netziv therefore interprets וַיָּרֵעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרִים as, "The Egyptians turned us into the bad guys." He continues: The Egyptians revised the narrative, making us look evil and ungrateful (עשו אותנו לרעים וכפויי טובה), until they themselves became suspicious and scared of us, and accused us of preparing to attack them first, which was not what actually happened. Then they enslaved us to keep us down.

Hamas has done the exact same thing. They have denied their own heinous wrongdoing that directly resulted in this war, and instead shifted the focus to make Israel into the aggressor. The oppressor. The great evil.

The Netziv then explains the word וַיְעַנּוּנוּ, "they oppressed us," as a type of enslavement that is more intent on hurting the enslaved than about benefiting the enslaver. The Egyptians forced the women to do the backbreaking building work they weren't used to, and the men to do the domestic work they weren't used to. It is clear that the Egyptians didn't really care about the work getting done most efficiently; it was designed to terrorize and dehumanize the workers.

Hamas has done the exact same thing. Holding hostages of all ages and health conditions, while refusing to honor their promise of getting vital medication to the hostages, nor allowing aid workers to send assurance of signs of life - all of this is done deliberately by Hamas to terrorize and dehumanize Israel.

And finally, וַיְמָרְרוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה - "the Egyptians imposed heavy labor upon us." They quashed and squashed us. As the Netziv says, the heavy labor broke us down.

Hamas has done the exact same thing. This war has wreaked havoc on our agriculture sector, on the families that sit in wait wondering if their loved ones who were stolen from them or who are fighting are still alive. It has damaged our spirit. It has traumatized and humiliated and bullied an entire nation. Let us use this Seder as an opportunity for learning - to discern truth clearly and name it boldly, without fear. In naming things as they are, we empower ourselves with the strength and courage needed to face the new day.

Go out and learn what Hamas seeks to do to our people: while Pharaoh only planned to kill our boys and work us to death, Hamas attempts to turn the world against us. To quash our spirit. To break us.

As **in every generation**, though, they will not succeed. For God will hear our cries, take us out of the narrow places, and we will live and even sing another day.

The Ten Plagues

Rabbi Jon Leener

Rabbi Jon Leener is a Faculty Associate Fellow for Pardes North America. He is also the Rabbi of the Prospect Heights Shul in Brooklyn, NY.

When considering the 10 Plagues in the context of collective punishment, the Seder takes on a more complex and perhaps uncomfortable tone. The liberation of the Jews from Egypt came at a great cost—the suffering of all Egyptians and even death for a selected few, primarily the firstborn males. Why did God hold the entire society responsible for the enslavement of the Jews? Pharaoh appeared to be the primary force behind the extreme cruelty towards the Jews, not the average Egyptian. Yet, In the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, "In a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible."

Concerning collective punishment, the Talmud (Shabbat 54b) explicitly states, "If it is possible for him to protest against the deeds of the people of his city and he does not do so, he is held responsible for the wrongs of the people of the city." The Zohar (Zohar II, 47a) further adds, "The acts of the leader are the acts of the nation. If the leader is just, the nation is just; if he is unjust, the nation too is unjust and is punished for the sins of the leader." For the sages, if you live in a morally bankrupt society like Egypt, which allowed the existence of slavery without any vocal opposition, you must be accountable.

This radical or even extreme call for moral responsibility has challenged Jews throughout the generations. For example, how can children, who have no agency, be punished for the sins of their parents?

This question around punishing children for the deeds of their parents has been wrestled throughout our tradition. As Moses receives the second set of tablets in Exodus 32, we are told "פֹּקֵד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְעַל־בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל־שִׁלֵּשִׁים וְעַל־רִבֵּעִים" – that God visits the transgression of the fathers upon the sons and upon the grandchildren and even the great grandchildren. However the sages of our Talmud suggest that while this may have been the initial intent, it was later revoked by subsequent prophets, stating in Makkot 24a:

Makkot 24a

Moses said: "He visits the transgression of the fathers upon the sons" (Exodus 34:7). Ezekiel came and revoked it: "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4) [and not the children of that soul].

מכות כ"ד א

מֹשֶׁה אָמַר: "פֹּקֵד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים", בָּא יְחֶזְקֵאל וּבִיטְּלָהּ: "הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחֹטֵאת הִיא תָּמוּת".

This has led to the custom of Jews spilling a drop of wine after reciting each of the plagues. The loss of any life is a tragedy. Perhaps this ritual's wordlessness reflects the complicated emotions it evokes – a silent expression of grief that transcends language.

Dayenu

Rabbi Jessica Minnen

From the Hebrew די (enough) combined with the first person plural suffix, Dayenu is often translated into English as "It would have been enough." The first extant version of the complete 15-stanza version of the song can be found in the Seder Rav Amram of Amram bar Sheshna, the Gaon of Sura in 9th century CE Jewish Babylonia.

The melody many of us use today is a march in 4/4 time — catchy at first, perhaps less so after the tenth of fifteen refrains. The song follows a useful mnemonic: three topics, each five stanzas long. We are first unshackled from the bonds of slavery, then we experience miracles, and lastly we encounter manifestations of our relationship with God.

For me, Dayenu prompts a question every year — and I feel it this year most acutely. Would it really have been enough? If God freed us from bondage but did not split the sea, would it really have been enough? If God split the sea but did not give us Torah, would it really have been enough?

I don't want to sound unappreciative. I'm all for having a strong gratitude practice. But when I think about what makes us who we are as a people, well... we needed it all. We needed to be redeemed from our enslavers. We needed the sea to be split. We needed Shabbat and Torah m'Sinai and Eretz Yisrael and the Beit ha'Mikdash. You could argue that's the point of Dayenu. It's tongue in cheek. We say it would have been enough knowing it would not have been.

This year, in the wake of October 7th, I wonder if it might be time to sweeten the taste of Dayenu's irony with a less paradoxical coda. Let's think about what we really need as a people and ask ourselves: What would be enough? Safe and secure borders in Israel. The return of hostages. The eradication of Hamas. Support from the international community to strengthen infrastructure, education, and employment opportunities for Palestinians. A commitment from global leaders to combat and root out antisemitism in all its insidious forms.

This year, invite your Seder table to imagine Dayenu is a vision statement. Think about "enoughness" and its potential. Ask your guests to share a hope or dream for the weeks and months ahead. What would be enough? I imagine these wishes ascending to the heavens intertwined with fifteen refrains of Dayenu as a prayer to the One who creates peace for us, for all Israel, and for all the world.

That, I think, just might be enough.

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