

HAGGADAH

Telling Our Stories

Haggadah literally means “a telling.” During Passover, we tell the story of the Jews escape from Egypt. It is our collective story. Further, as we recount the story of Exodus and rejoice in our freedom, we are urged to include the stranger, reminded that we, too, were “strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:20). Unfortunately, many within our communities remain strangers. We share our collective story, but our individual stories remain hidden, especially for those with disabilities.

People with disabilities can feel invisible, misunderstood, unheard, marginalized, or disbelieved. Too often, we forget or neglect to create a truly accessible seat at the Passover table. Even when that seat exists, we may come no closer to knowing the person who occupies it. We recite the Seder, sitting side by side, but leave as strangers still. It is when we share our unique stories, when we take the time to listen and connect with each other, that we are no longer strangers.

Passover can and should be a time of connection—the type of connection that “exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” (Dr. Brené Brown). Let’s make this year one where we tell our stories and leave the table stronger for our connections.



Four Questions for Connection and Belonging

Consider integrating the questions below as you discuss the symbols of Passover. For larger seders, you might discuss the questions in pairs or small groups, or only discuss 1-2 questions.

Why is this night different from all other nights?



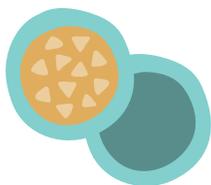
QUESTION 1

Because we eat Matzah, the bread of affliction. Many of us carry our own burdens or are weighed down by challenges in our lives. On other nights, we keep these challenges to ourselves. On this night, let us share. ***What is one challenge you are currently facing?***



QUESTION 2

Because we eat Maror, the bitter herbs. All of us experience bitterness in our lives at one point or another. On other nights, we may dwell alone on those feelings. On this night, let's learn different ways to let go. ***How do you get over feelings of bitterness?***



QUESTION 3

Because we dip our food twice, once in salt water and once in Charoset. The salt water symbolizes our tears and the Charoset represents mortar, the substance that holds bricks together. On other nights, we work to hold ourselves together. On this night, let's support each other. ***What is one type of support you appreciate when things are difficult?***



QUESTION 4

Because we recline on pillows in relaxation and comfort. On other nights, we rush through meals. On this night, we receive comfort in observing communal traditions and connecting with others. ***How do you like to connect? How do those connections give you a sense of belonging?***

While the goal of this activity is to connect with each other, we recognize not everyone feels comfortable sharing. On any given question, feel free to pass to the next person or share something else.



Suggestions for Hosting an Accessible Passover Seder

- Evaluate your physical space. Is the entry to your space accessible to those who use mobility devices? Is the room where you will be holding Seder accessible? Is there an accessible bathroom nearby?
- Consider the foods you will be serving. Do you need to account for any food allergies and/or dietary restrictions?
- Think about seating arrangements that would best support those with hearing or vision loss.
- Find different options for engaging everyone who wants to participate in the Seder. Make sure reading does not feel obligatory and consider other ways to involve your guests (e.g., holding up the symbols of Passover, opening the door for Elijah, hiding the Afikomen, recounting the story of Passover in their own words, etc.)
- Utilize visual supports for guests who are not able to read and/or for those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (e.g. [Gateway Haggadah and Resources](#))
- For large seders especially, offer a quiet space where participants can take a break from the noise and commotion.
- Offer to assist in arranging rides for those who need help with transportation.
- Invite those who cannot be in person to join you virtually. Send them a link or a physical copy of your Haggadah. You may also consider sending them/dropping off prepared foods or items needed for the Seder.
- Remember those with chronic health conditions or mental illness may need to change plans at the last minute due to exacerbated symptoms, flare ups, or limited energy. Consider ways you might adjust the plans and pivot with compassion.

Additionally, just as organizations ask individual participants about accommodations they may need when they register for an event, you might do the same when inviting your guests.