

IDENTITY

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 Haggadot have been developed over the years to reflect the interests of different participants and also to speak to various populations or issues.

Generally, each Haggadah 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,