

Pesach Message for Movement for Reform Judaism

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The Pesach Hagaddah may be the most popular single book for Jews, so many homes have multiple copies.

We can get very fond of our Hagaddot. They remind us of the specialness of coming together for Seder night with family and friends. You might have a selection of Hagaddot at home. Maybe you have that classic children's Haggadah, first published in Berlin in 1933, with the pop-out pictures for children and the tab which you pulled to part the Red Sea. Your Seder may be based on our Reform Hagaddah, Haggateinu, published in 2014 (www.reformjudaism.org.uk/publications/), which tells our Jewish story of liberation through plays that get everyone participating.

One beautiful aspect of the Hagaddah is that this is a book that is designed to be used, not just treasured on a bookshelf. The wear of their use tells stories of Sedarim enjoyed, members of the family no longer with us who once handled them, and maybe the ways in which we have enhanced Pesach with extra readings tucked into their pages. I love the stains from the drops of wine that you can find on the page where the plagues are enumerated. I have a facsimile copy of the Barcelona Hagaddah originally made in 1340, and on the plague page, I am sure I can see the wine stains of centuries past!

The Hagaddah itself creates the drama of the festival and makes Pesach come to life. It passes on the values of freedom and the active liberation of oppressed peoples as a duty to ourselves and our future generations. It links us to our previous generations, their struggles, and their triumphs, which enable us to live as free Jews today. It paints for us our picture of God as our partner in liberation and the continuation of our people. Who knows One? The Jew whose Hagaddah is with them year after year.

Our Movement for Reform Judaism will soon be publishing another book that every Jewish home should own. This will be the ninth edition of Days of Awe, our Machzor, the prayer book for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This book will also create the drama and meaning of these special days every year. The first edition was published in 1840 and the now very familiar eighth a generation ago in 1985. It will include study material from an extraordinary diversity of sources to enhance your soul's appreciation of the meaning of the High Holy Days. It will be very clear to use and accessible to those less familiar with Synagogue and Hebrew. It will give the prayer choice throughout the Days of Awe through contemporary and classical passages alongside the traditional prayers. On these days when we consider our own behaviour and actions it will help bring us close to the concerns of today's world. It will be ready for us all to use for High Holidays 2024 with plenty of time to prepare. We Jews have been called the 'People of the Book' for many centuries. In truth, we are the people of the Jewish library who use our many books to start and fuel our Jewish journeys through life.