

A FUTURIST HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Suzette, Lisa and Becca all practice futures thinking as a way to create positive impact and better tomorrows. We believe in collaboration, imagination and work across generations – which is exactly what inspired us to come together to consider rituals we share through our distinct, but connected futurist lenses. We proudly represent three different generations of Jewish women. This supplement is our effort to bring more expansive thinking and futurism into Jewish practice.

DIG DEEPER: MORE ON JEWISH FUTURES

What is Jewish Futurism? by David Zvi Kalman

On Judeofuturism by Becca Leviss

Reimagining the Four Questions by Suzette Brooks Masters

Why is this Passover Seder an invitation to imagine better futures?

by Lisa Kay Solomon

Developing future-focused Jewish leaders by Lisa Kay Solomon

THE PASSOVER SEDER INVITES US TO IMAGINE THE FUTURE

Passover holds a unique place in the Jewish holidays. It honors an “ordered” storytelling tradition that invites us to time travel, to imagine alternative futures, and to embody the bold transformational journey of the Jewish people in all its complexity – from migration to enslavement to eventual liberation. This is a journey that unfolded over generations and that continues to unfold.

At the Seder, we are asked to collapse time, inviting us to not just tell the story, but to imagine that we are in the story. This year, more than ever, we believe that Passover is a moment to not only reflect on the story that explains our Exodus out of Egypt and bondage, but also actively imagine and engage with stories yet to unfold. What could a truly flourishing future look like?

This supplement to a traditional Haggadah is designed to prompt new conversations, connections and explorations at this time of great change and disruption for Jews.

In Jewish tradition, time operates as a place as much as a time. Like Abraham Joshua Heschel's (z"l) characterization of the Sabbath as a “palace in time,” when we ask each other “where are we in Jewish time?” we are orienting ourselves in both time and space. In observing Passover, we enter our own shared space, where ritual connects us to Seders past, present, and future. We are invited to tell the Passover story as if we were slaves in Egypt while reclining and celebrating as if we all are fully liberated – because in this Passover time-space, we share company with those celebrating the very first Exodus as well as those experiencing freedom in the future.

All too often, the opportunity to imagine forward is overlooked or deprioritized in favor of connecting to our past. It's understandable why. Even while recounting difficult and painful stories about our ancestors, the past can feel safer than examining our present or imagining our future.

And, yet, it's not enough.

At this time of threat and uncertainty for the Jewish people amid rapid technological, demographic, geopolitical and climatic change, it's important to nurture aspirations beyond mere survival. We should push boundaries to boldly imagine the Jewish people and the human and more-than-human world thriving for millennia to come.

Fortunately, many aspects of the Seder already provide openings for exploration of what the future could and should hold.

We believe that every Seder should embody the spirit of our bold and visionary ancestors and bring that transformational possibility into our present and future.

Here are some tangible ways to bring this lens into your Seder practice:

ASK FUTURE-FORWARD SEDER QUESTIONS

The tradition of asking questions invites us to consider how our present moment shapes our understanding of both past and future. While it's important to remember Pharaoh, Moses and the pyramids, the plagues and the journey through the desert, what questions should we ask that orient us towards more expansive Jewish futures? An intergenerational approach – *l'dor vador* (from generation to generation) – casts us as “good ancestors” for our descendants.

After the traditional Four Questions, consider adding:

Why is this time different from other times? Where does history “rhyme” with this moment and how can we use that to imagine the future?

How can we use our agency as Jews to ensure vibrant and flourishing collective futures?

How can we shape a world where the most marginalized among us are able to thrive?

IMAGINE NEW ARCHETYPES FOR THE FOUR CHILDREN

The Passover Seder recognizes the need to meet children where they are in their development, curiosity and understanding. The traditional four children we honor – Wise, Wicked, Simple, and Not Yet Able to Ask – may not be enough for the complexity of this moment. Many families feel fractured and disconnected from each other, based on different lived experiences and diverging worldviews. Can we deepen our empathy and expand our curiosity by inviting more voices in?

Here are four alternative archetypes to try:

The frightened child asks: How do I navigate a world that feels increasingly threatening?

The disengaged child asks: Why should I care? Why is it worth the effort to be affiliated with a tradition that is constantly under pressure?

The hopeful young dreamer asks: What does a future look like where Jews all over the world are thriving, even if it seems impossible at this moment?

The budding changemaker asks: How can we bring about a future that is pluralist, abundant, sustainable and free for all people? What does that environment look like and how can we build on it?

By imagining these new archetypes, we are reminded that we all bring different perspectives to the Seder table and that some aspects of all four children are inside each of us. We are all a bit frightened, a bit disengaged, and with endless potential for hope, dreams, and action.

RECONTEXTUALIZE THE PLAGUES

The ten plagues anchor us in memory. Reciting each one with an experiential dip of our finger into wine symbolizing blood and hardship reminds us of the oppressive conditions from which we came. Just as we commemorate the plagues of our past and our present, what are sources of blessing that we wish to bring into the future?

After the reading of each plague, invite those around the table to name a blessing that would be ritually represented by a drop of water. Just as Miriam's well nurtured the Jewish people in their 40-year journey through the desert, so too can our blessings nourish us as we commit ourselves to bringing about futures that might feel far off and idealistic in this moment.

Consider adding a drop of water after each drop of blood as each blessing is named.

ADD NEW ARTIFACTS TO THE SEDER PLATE

The Seder plate already contains tangible artifacts that enable us to travel through time. From bitter herbs to salt water to charoseth, each creates a symbolic bridge to past events. Over time, we've added new ones too: an orange to symbolize LGBTQ+ members of Jewish communities, olives as a symbol of hope and solidarity for a future peace between Israelis and Palestinians, artichokes for interfaith families, and something yellow and bitter while hostages from 10/7 remained in captivity.

What new artifacts could be placed on the Seder plate to imagine different Jewish futures?

EMPHASIZE ACTIVITIES THAT FOSTER VISIONING

How else can we embody liberation and thriving at the Seder table? Our Seder tradition already incorporates practices of reclining, drinking four cups of wine, asking probing questions, and opening the door for Elijah – a personified symbol of the (a) future.

The singing of Dayenu, for example, reminds us that we are capable of doing more with less. Having each verse start with “It would have been enough if . . .” encourages us to acknowledge the foundational gifts of what we’ve been given, and to focus on gratitude as a source of strength. Appreciating what we have is a practice of resilience, and a reminder that we are not without options to build on. While the world may not be what we want it to be (yet), we can build on what we do have.

How might you identify new elements of “Dayenu” in your life to be grateful for that may also serve as seeds for new possibilities to come.

What other ways might there be to inhabit the better futures we aspire to? Ask each person to come ready to share a vision of a positive Jewish future.