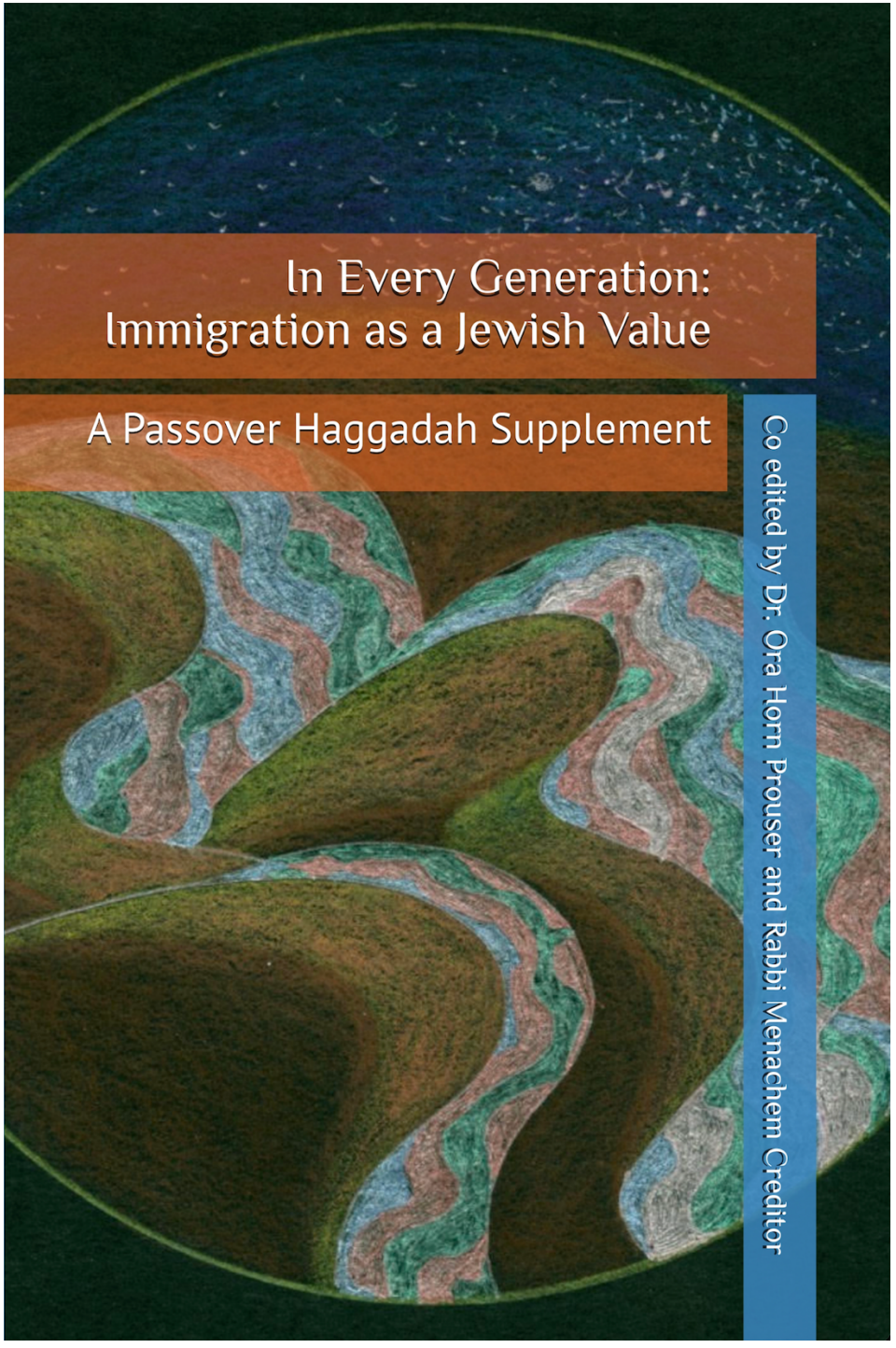

In Every Generation: Immigration as a Jewish Value

A Passover Haggadah Supplement

Co edited by Dr. Ora Horn Prouser and Rabbi Menachem Creditor

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מניין לארבעה כוסות. רבי יוחנן בשם רבי בנייה. כנגד ארבע גאולות. לכן אמר לבני ישראל אני יי והוצאתי אתכם וגו'. ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם וגו'. והוצאתי. והצלתי. וגאלתי. ולקחתי.

From where do we derive the custom of the Four Cups? Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rebbi Benaiah taught: Corresponding to the four biblical languages of redemption:
I shall take you, I shall save you,
I shall free you, I shall claim you.

Jerusalem Talmud, Pesachim 10:1

זוהי לא נבואת נחמה
זוהי תוכנית עבודה

This is not a prophecy of consolation.
THIS is the work ahead.

"One Must See Oneself," Chen Artzi Saror
Translation: Rabbi Karen Reiss Medwed,
adapted by Rabbi Robert Scheinberg

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Dr. Ora Horn Prouser

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ
כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

In every generation we are OBLIGATED
to see ourselves as if we were the ones
who left Egypt.

This is one of the most profound statements in the *Haggadah*. It is not a suggestion, or a metaphor. We are told that we absolutely must do whatever is necessary to remember that we were immigrants. We must feel what it means to leave your home and to go into the unknown. We have to recognize the pain, the courage, and the need for a community that understands and cares. It is very clear that care for immigrants is a Jewish value, one that not only serves those who have joined our communities, but that defines all of us as a people with a moral code. We have a history as a people of being immigrants of necessity, not as a matter of choice. This is an area that touches each one of us deeply.

This volume is the fifth in a series of supplements to Jewish holiday liturgy and celebration. We work to make the supplements responsive to current issues in the Jewish community. Only a few weeks ago, many of us were focusing deeply on the plight of immigrants in the United States. Our collective attention has shifted in the past few weeks to the war in Iran and to our American soldiers and Israeli brethren. And yet, has the

plight of immigrants been solved? Rather, our headlines are shifting focus at breakneck speed, and we are unable to keep up intellectually and emotionally. The *Haggadah* itself, and this volume, come to remind us that we must find a way to make room for expansive empathy in many directions at once. We can not just follow whatever is our most recent crisis.

This volume reflects the ethos of AJR. As a pluralistic institution we know that there are many different approaches to any topic, and we know that you will find a true variety of ideas within these pages. We believe in the relevance of our sacred literature for the contemporary Jewish world, and we know that our history, texts, and liturgy provide us with much wisdom in confronting contemporary social issues. AJR is proud to be both Zionist in philosophy and liberal on many social issues. This is a combination that has become quite rare in our communities.

Thank you to all who made this book possible. Rabbi Menachem Creditor has been a cherished partner in this work and has carefully and with a true sense of mission seen this book through to publication. Thank you to all the contributors who have shared their creativity and their intellectual and spiritual pursuits with all of us. Thank you to all our AJR colleagues who have made this work possible.

We hope that you will find material in this volume to supplement and enhance your *seder*.

We hope that these pieces will help you to follow the sacred pursuit that we must see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. And we hope that this mandate will lead us all to grow in empathy and serve those who find themselves strangers in a strange land.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה
Next year in Jerusalem – in peace.

Dr. Ora Horn Prouser, she/her, is the CEO and Academic Dean at The Academy for Jewish Religion. She has worked with educational institutions to develop curricula and approaches to Bible pedagogy for all levels and learning styles. Her book, *Esau's Blessing: How the Bible Embraces Those with Special Needs* was recognized as a National Jewish Book Council finalist and as a Gold winner in the 2016 Special Needs Book Awards. Her more recent book, *Under One Tent: Circus, Judaism, and Bible* breaks new ground in the use of movement and circus arts in studying biblical text.

כרפס
Karpas

Karpas: To Dip in Tears and Come out a Dwelling

Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses

וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת־נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים
הֱיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם׃

> A stranger you are not to oppress:
> you yourselves know the soul of the stranger, for strangers were you in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

In repeatedly telling us to remember we were a stranger the Torah asks much of us.

Not only does it ask us to go back in time across generations to an experience our ancestors had as though it were our own; knowing the soul of the stranger means mining our own feelings of radical vulnerability, drawing on our own past of strangeness.

To do so points to the secret chambers, the darkness of our own heart– exposing its most sensitive core. This is not a natural process, it's a sensitivity we would of course prefer to leave untouched– but doing so, dipping into those sensitive places means emerging with impassioned empathy, fuel that personally animates the *mitzvot* commanding us to protect the stranger.

This dynamic is described by the psychoanalyst and philosopher Robert Stolorow in an interview in *Psychology Today* when he explains the dynamic between analyst and patient:
"If we are to be an understanding relational home for a traumatized person, we must tolerate, even draw upon, our own existential vulnerabilities so that we can dwell unflinchingly with his or her unbearable and recurring emotional pain. When we dwell with others' unendurable pain, their shattered emotional worlds are enabled to shine with a kind of sacredness that calls forth an understanding and caring engagement within which traumatized states can be gradually transformed into bearable painful feelings."
Jewishly, the process that Stolorow specifies for an analyst, is upon each of us– to mine our own "existential vulnerabilities" and emerge as a "dwelling" (a term he uses elsewhere) for the suffering other.

The more we are able to enter the strangeness of our own hearts, the more we are ethically equipped to stand up for and stand by the stranger: the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the father and child plucked off the street by ICE agents, those threatened daily by racism and xenophobia.

But the *seder* goes further, requiring of us something more radical, more intimate than imagination. Our tradition calls on us to literally consume our ancestral experience, to *eat* our heritage of slavery and liberation.

- It's the feel of crumbling matzah in our mouths, at once the taste of slavery's deprivation and of earthy freedom.
- It's the sweet dark *charoset*, the dense taste of mortar and bricks.
- It's the inescapable bitterness of *maror,* the taste of a*vodah kasha*, of harsh labor.
- It's the crunch of spring vegetables, rebirth in our mouths in the form of *karpas.*
- It's our ancestors's tears, salt water in which we dip our *karpas*–a taste of grief paired with the luxurious gesture of dipping.

We are obligated to know in our guts what it was like to be a slave laboring in infinite sadness– and we were given the gift of the *seder* by which to do this. In fully participating, we literally become the dwelling that Stolorow describes, a *mishkan,* our psyches *and bodies* transmuted into a home for the traumatic experience of our ancestors, for our own trauma, and for the stranger amongst us right now, by our telling and our eating of the story.

In my life, I go through cycles – there are times when tears come easily . . . and then there are other times when the world– or for that matter, my own life–becomes too much, the volume of emotion exceeding the container of my heart. I go numb; I shut down; feeling freezes and my heart becomes a block of ice, flow inaccessible.

By centering the experience of the stranger, of the vulnerable other within us and before us, our tradition beckons us back from numbness. By dipping *karpas* into salt water, we turn the *seder* from a cognitive experience into one that can shift our stony hearts into flow and feeling.

So this Passover let us become a dwelling: let us dip, let us taste the salt on our tongues, let us savor the taste of rebirth paired with grief when we crunch on spring vegetables dipped in salt. Let us have the courage to draw upon the unbearable feelings within, becoming more intimate with our own feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness and grief; in short, to let our tears flow for ourselves, for our ancestors and for the increasingly endangered by the forces of oppression. May that shared experience give us strength to stand up for the strangers in our midst.

Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses is the first woman from the Syrian Jewish community to become a rabbi. She is a recent recipient of a Covenant Award for exceptional educators. She currently serves Romemu as a rabbi, and also teaches widely and writes about Torah, ethnicity and disabilities.

מַגִּיד

Maggid

Setting Out

Janet R. Kirchheimer

> It is not permitted to set out on a ship less than three days before Shabbos. This is said only for a voluntary purpose. For a mitzvah, it is permitted.
> *—Babylonian Talmud: Shabbos 19a*

"I almost lost all my photographs,"
my father tells me.
"My mother, sister, and brother brought me
to the train in Niederstetten on Thursday.
I got off in Aachen and waited with others
for the Antwerp train.
The Gestapo pulled me out,
searched my luggage, my family photographs,
told me to take off my shoes and socks,
searched them, let me go.
I missed the train and waited two hours
for the next one.

Shabbos morning, I walked to the boat.
My name was called on the loudspeaker,
and I reported to the purser
who said my large suitcase wasn't sent
from the train station.
He would drive me there if I wanted.
If I didn't return on time, I would miss the ship,
but those photographs were all I had.
I found my suitcase, and the purser drove
as fast as he could back to the ship.

I climbed the gangplank, about four stories high,
with my suitcase, and as I got close
to the deck, a dockworker pushed
the gangplank away.
With all my might, I threw the suitcase
on deck and jumped on the ship.

A Chinese fellow and I
played shuffleboard and Ping-Pong.
We couldn't talk to each other,
but we understood each other.
It was before I made new friends,
before I met your mother.
The Nazi government allowed emigres
to leave with ten U.S. dollars, and I
spent three in Antwerp, one aboard ship.
Aunt Elsie came to the docks in Hoboken
and took me to the Bronx.
I came to America on August 29, 1939,
with six dollars and my life.

Janet R. Kirchheimer is the author of *How to Spot One of Us* and co-author of *Seduction: Out of Eden*. She is the producer of the award-winning film, AFTER: Poetry Destroys Silence.

Ellen Shapiro, “Immigrants’ Carrying Case”

Ellen M. Shapiro is a writer and designer. Among her notable projects is the AJR logo, symbolizing "weaving together the strands of Judaism" in the colors of the *Mishkan* tapestries, purple, crimson and blue. A writer on design issues, trends and education, she is the author of books on the design business and a longtime contributor to Printmag.com and Communications Arts magazine. Her new book, *The Secret Buttons*, is a saga of emigration from Nazi-occupied Austria through the eyes of two young girls who flee to England on domestic servant visas and solve a very grown-up problem.

Breaking News: Refugee Report from the Middle East

Nechama Liss-Levinson, PhD

Special Security Report: There is a new, well-documented report of a dangerous, swarm of refugees wandering in the Sinai Peninsula. They call themselves the Jewish people. These Jews migrated to Egypt during a famine several hundred years ago, at the behest of the King. One of them had famously helped the previous King though an economic crisis. However, they are viewed by the current King Pharoah as "outsiders, criminals, rabble rousers."

After several high-level cabinet meetings, the Pharoah tweeted that the Jews were a severe and present danger and that what they secretly wanted was to rule over Egypt (#jewsneedtogo, #jewstakingover, #toomanyjews).

Mass detentions and incarceration as slaves seemed to be the only option for this King and he was rather easily able to convince his people to follow through on his plan.

Several Jews began a movement to protest this treatment. This infuriated the Pharoah, who then ordered infanticide for the male children. There have been numerous reports of mass killing of newborn males born to the Jewish people in the land of Egypt. A small group of midwives went on strike in protest, but shockingly few people joined them. In response to this latest round of

murders and continued forced labor, the Jewish rebel leader, Moses, began an extremely successful social media campaign:

#LETMY PEOPLEGO

Moses received an overwhelming response from the Jews and with great fanfare, he left Egypt in the middle of the night, with about three million followers. This includes about 600,000 men between the ages of 20-50, the rest of the group being women, children, and the elderly. This ragtag group traversed the desert on foot and has taken an extremely dangerous path directly across the Red Sea. We have no idea how many may have drowned in that crossing. Satellite reports show that the group has resumed some kind of circuitous route, currently in the Sinai Peninsula, but their goal seems unclear. They are hoping that someone will take these refugees in. They desperately need food, water, and shelter. So far, every nation has refused, citing the Pharoah's initial concerns that the group may be "criminals, outsiders and dangerous."

QUESTIONS for the Good Citizens of the World to consider:

1) King Pharoah said that these Jews are dangerous criminals. Several nations are concerned that these people may pose a terrorist threat. Others worry that they will take over jobs that their own people may need. What is your response?

2) Professor Ani Zachor, a midwife and prophetess, has been preaching that the world is filled with wanderers and migrants, often fleeing persecution or searching for food sources for themselves or their flocks. Her followers have started their own media campaign (#Remember #WeAreAllRefugees "HelpTheStranger). How do you feel about this? Does this resonate for you?

3) This issue is tearing families apart. Families can't even sit down to a meal together without arguments breaking out. One reporter spoke to four children from the same family. Gershon felt that the refugees should return to Egypt, and shouldn't affect his family, which already had a lot of problems. Ahuva emphasized that all humanity is connected through God, and we are all responsible for one another as human beings. Bina, the third child thought that we should take in only those who had good skills, for example, the architects of the pyramids. And the fourth child would not speak to the reporter, citing no interest in the news or in creating further family conflict. Any suggestions for this family?

4) Elie Wiesel once said "Indifference to evil is evil." If you agree, what is your obligation here?

Nechama Liss-Levinson, PhD is a psychologist, author and social activist. She has written extensively on developmental milestones in the Jewish family, including her book for kids, *When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Remembering Workbook for Dealing with Shiva and the Year Beyond.*

Sharing Our Freedom Story

Moshe Creditor

When I first applied to be an intern for the American Civic Association, a non-profit in New York's Broome County, which assists immigrants with applying for citizenship and holds community events such as food drives, I had the sense that, while this organization did very holy and necessary work, it was likely also one that wouldn't necessarily appreciate my Zionist identity. The primary descriptor of those who work there is that they are, first and foremost, wonderful people who largely align with modern progressive movements. As a progressive Zionist, I often find myself in circles and situations in which I support the goal of a group, while knowing that if those around me were aware of my love and support for Israel, they might look at me a little differently.

I was blessed to be accepted as an intern, and come to the ACA's office a few times a week to help with paperwork and client meetings. I have felt incredibly fulfilled, with one tiny caveat. I was assigned a small cubicle in the back corner of the office, removed from the others who work there. The office features flags and globes everywhere, reflecting our diverse client base. Our commitment is that everyone who walks in our doors should feel welcome. These colorful flags - including Honduras, Haiti, Kenya, Afghanistan, and many more - fill every wall and ceiling space, a beautiful show

of diversity and cultural appreciation. But the one flag I hadn't seen was the Israeli flag.

We who love Israel (and Israelis) are, unfortunately, no strangers to feeling left out of communal moments and spaces dedicated to cultural appreciation. Even acknowledging Israel can often be considered taboo in liberal spaces for various (often ungrounded) reasons. So while I felt proud to be contributing to the holy work of the ACA, I had not felt truly myself while I was there, often leaving the Zionist part of my identity out of conversations around religion with my co-interns.

Today, that changed.

My eyes have been feeling dry recently, and so I've begun bringing eye drops with me to work. As I tilted my head back, I looked up for the first time at the ceiling directly above my cubicle. There, above my head the entire time I've been here, was the flag of *Medinat Yisrael*, the State of Israel. Though I had not known, my family was with me the entire time I have been helping people gain legal status to be with their loved ones. I had felt hesitant to be publicly proud of my people, but little did I know that the flag of my people was with me the entire time, watching over my head.

The story of *Pesach*, told during *Magid*, is at its roots a story of migration.

B'nei Yisrael are refugees from *Mitzrayim*, having been enslaved and mistreated by Pharaoh and those in power. They seek asylum in the wilderness, and eventually find their way to *Eretz Yisrael*. The work I feel so privileged to do in my internship, while small in scope, is not small in meaning and impact for the people who I am helping. I am able to do this work while also being proud of who I am. The work itself is everything *Am Yisrael* is and stands for. We were once strangers in a strange land too. It is an integral lesson of our people's story that we recognize when others are strangers in strange lands. We must remember where we came from.

Let us remember and celebrate *Yetziyat Miztrayim*, and recognize and help those who may be struggling to leave their own *Mitzrayim* right now.

Chag Sameach, and *Am Yisrael Chai!*

Moshe Creditor is a Third-Year student at Binghamton University who is passionate about justice and environmentalism.

Amy Pollack, “We Were Strangers Too”

Amy Pollack is a graphic designer and artist based in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Her work includes mixed media collage, book and publication design and branding. View her portfolio at www.twistnshout.com

Moshe Outside

Shari Salzhauer Berkowitz

Moshe Rabbeinu was always on the outside.
He never made it home.
Fished from the river, to masquerade as a prince
But never feeling quite like a prince somehow.
Striking down the overseer
--where did that come from?
From the whispers in the hallway
about his birth?
From his bones? From his heart?
In his tent with Zipporah,
far from his confusing childhood,
He found a quiet peace,
But even so, had to speak in another tongue
With his own tongue scarred and stiff,
slowly forming thoughts in his third language.
Heading back to Pharoah's palace,
he was a changed man;
He had seen things.
All those tongue waggers who said he would never turn out right were vindicated.
After crossing the sea, he was now adrift
on a sea of sand,
Leading a ragtag band of a million misfits toward a land promised
But not to Moshe himself.

Once he left his mother's breast
Moshe was never home again
I feel that way sometimes.

Dr. Shari Salzhauer Berkowitz is an author (*Color the Omer*), songwriter, educator, prayer leader, cantorial soloist, and shofar trainer. She studies part-time online at Hebrew Seminary, in their para-rabbi program.

Do You Want Bread?

Ilona Levinets

At the beginning of the Maggid section of the *Haggadah*, we lift the matzah and say:

> "*Ha lachma anya* — this is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat."

Before we tell the story of liberation, we begin with bread.

The Haggadah does not begin with triumph or power. It begins with memory — the memory of hunger, vulnerability, and displacement. And from that memory comes an invitation: if someone is hungry, we must open the door.

In my family, this teaching is not only liturgical. It is a story that has been passed down for generations.

My grandfather arrived in Georgia as a refugee child. His family were jewelers living near Odessa during a time of violence and uncertainty. In fear for their lives, their mother placed three children on a ship and gave them gold and jewels — everything she could carry — telling them she would meet them in three days in Istanbul.

But the ship never reached Istanbul.

Because of a technical problem, it stopped instead at the nearest port: Poti, on the Black Sea coast of Georgia.

My grandfather was the oldest child, only nine years old. His younger sister and brother were with him. When the ship stopped, he assumed this must be the first stop their mother had mentioned. The name of the place sounded unfamiliar, but he led the children off the ship.

They waited for their mother for three days.

They had brought food for three days. After that, they had nothing left.

When their mother did not come, my grandfather took the jewels and gold their mother had given them and went to find the director of the port. He placed everything they had on the table and said simply: this is all we have, and we are hungry.

The first Georgian words my grandfather ever heard were: “Do you want bread?”

The port director took the children in. He fed them and raised them as his own. With the money the children had brought, he built them a home and gave them a life.

Eighteen years later, their mother finally found them.

She had searched relentlessly and eventually discovered in the ship's records that the vessel had been forced to stop in Poti. After nearly two decades, the family was reunited.

But the words that remained in my grandfather's memory were not about borders, or documents, or explanations. They were the first words spoken to a hungry child in a strange land:

"Do you want bread?"

That sentence became sacred in our family.

When war came to Georgia in 2008 and refugees arrived in our neighborhood school, my father remembered that story. Without hesitation, he bought sixty loaves of bread and brought them to the displaced families who had fled their homes.

He said it was a debt from his father.

When his father was a hungry refugee child, no one asked who he was or where he came from. They simply gave him bread.

For the first weeks of the crisis, my family continued bringing food, clothing, and blankets to the refugees sheltering in the school. There were many families and many children, including newborn babies who had arrived with nothing.

In our home, this was not considered charity. It was memory.

Passover asks us not only to remember that we were slaves in Egypt, but to feel what that memory demands of us. The Torah reminds us again and again:

> "You know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

The *Haggadah* begins with bread because hunger is the most immediate human vulnerability. Before stories, before explanations, before identity, a hungry person must first be fed.

"Let all who are hungry come and eat."

Sometimes Jewish memory is preserved not only in books, but in a simple question asked at the right moment:

Do you want bread?

Ilona Levinets, a rabbinical student at AJR, is a Jewish educator and co-founder of Dor L'Dor, the first Reform Jewish center in The Republic of Georgia. Her work brings together Jewish learning, spiritual leadership, intercultural dialogue, and advocacy for women's leadership.

A Blue Bandana at the Door

David Weisberg

In the desert outside Tucson, someone showed me a GPS device with a category I did not know existed: RHR — recovered human remains.
There have been enough deaths that the desert has its own abbreviation.

We walked to one of those places. A small wooden cross marked where volunteers had found the remains of Prudencia Martin Gomez, eighteen years old, from Guatemala, who died trying to reunite with someone she loved.

We left water there. Just water.

On a nearby tree, a bandana once bright had faded, worn and barely recognizable.

And then - something small and strange - I realized I had packed a blue bandana that morning.

I tied it high on a branch so that anyone passing might see it and know: there is water here.

When we drove away, the water we left behind sat waiting, flanked by a blue bandana and a small wooden cross.

Every year at the Seder we lift the matzah and say: This is the bread of affliction… Let all who are hungry come and eat.

We say it easily. Around tables heavy with food and memory, we open a symbolic door.

But the Torah's refrain is not symbolic: You know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Not you know the law. Not you know the argument. You know the soul.

In the canyon near the border, a volunteer once called out in Spanish, "We are friendly, and we are bringing you water."

No one came out.

In that landscape, even kindness can sound like a trap.

The Israelites knew that terrain of fear. They left Egypt not knowing whether the wilderness held promise or death. They crossed into uncertainty carrying children and memory and the thin hope of freedom. The Torah does not romanticize that journey. It names hunger. It names thirst.

To remember Egypt is to remember what thirst feels like in the body.

And so the commandment: do not oppress the stranger. Love the stranger. Again and again and again - because we forget what it felt like to stand unprotected in a world that does not want you.

In a federal courtroom, I watched migrants led in shackled at wrists and ankles, processed in minutes.

One man, confused and frightened, finally said, "We don't come here to rob you. We just come here to find work to support our families."

Afterward, I wrote down their names - a litany of human beings - because names resist disappearance.

Passover insists on names. Pharaoh is named. Moses is named. Even the daughter who reaches into the Nile is named by our tradition. The story refuses to let suffering dissolve into statistics.

The blue bandana was not a solution. It was not policy. It was not an answer to a crisis.

It was a sign.

A small, visible declaration that someone might pass this way and live.

At the Seder, when we say Let all who are hungry come and eat, we are not only recalling the bread of affliction. We are placing a marker in the landscape of memory. We are tying something bright and visible to the tree of our tradition and saying:

There is sustenance here.
There is water here.

There is a people who remember what it was to be strangers.

Because we were strangers in the land of Egypt, we learn to leave signs of life in the wilderness.

David Weisberg helps lift up people facing crisis around the globe as Executive Director of World Jewish Relief USA, supports Philadelphia's vibrant immigrant community as Board Chair of the Garces Foundation, and is proud to be an altruistic living liver donor. This piece is adapted for this Haggadah supplement from his book *Border Song*.

Welcoming the Stranger, Upholding the Law

Arnie Draiman

"הא לחמא עניא... כל דכפין ייתי וייכול"
"Let all who are hungry come and eat."

On Pesach night, we open our doors, but we do not dissolve our boundaries. The invitation is generous — and it is ordered. There is a table, a story, a structure – the entire "seder" means order and structure. Freedom unfolds from within law.

The Torah commands us no fewer than thirty-six times to love the *ger* — the stranger. "ואהבתם את הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים" (*Devarim* 10:19). Our memory of Egypt forms the foundation of Jewish empathy. We know the soul of the stranger because we were strangers.

But the Torah's *ger* is not lawless. The ger of the Torah joins the covenantal framework. "תורה אחת יהיה לכם ולגר הגר בתוככם" (Bamidbar 15:16) — there shall be one law for you and for the stranger among you. The Torah's vision of welcome is not chaos; it is shared responsibility under law.

When we recall Egypt, we remember two truths. First: oppression is evil. "וימררו את חייהם" — they

embittered our lives for hundreds of years. A society that crushes the vulnerable betrays God's image. Second: Egypt had a structure, and we lived within it for generations. Our suffering came not from the existence of borders or law, but from cruelty and injustice.

Judaism does not idealize statelessness. Avraham negotiates for land. Yosef administers a national economy. Moshe establishes courts and officers. The Jewish story is not anti-structure; it is anti-oppression.

Pirkei Avot teaches: "הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות" — Pray for the welfare of the government (*Avot* 3:2). And the principle of *dina d'malchuta dina* — the law of the land is law — affirms that legal order has religious weight. To respect just law is not merely civic; it is spiritual.

Thus, when we say, "We were strangers in Egypt," we do not learn that borders are immoral. We learn that power must never be abusive, and that memory must cultivate compassion. The Torah commands both empathy and structure.

A society may welcome the stranger — but through law, not through disregard for it. A person seeking to enter a community honors that community by honoring its laws. And a community honors God by ensuring its laws are just, humane, and applied without cruelty.

Pesach is the story of liberation into covenant. We left Egypt not for anarchy, but for Sinai. Freedom culminated in law.

Tonight, as we sit secure at our tables, we ask:
Can we build communities that are lawful and compassionate?
Can we remember Egypt without recreating it?
Can we uphold order without hardening our hearts?

The *Haggadah* teaches that in every generation we must see ourselves as if we left Egypt. Perhaps this also means: in every generation we must build societies where strangers are treated with dignity — and where law serves justice, not fear.

Freedom without law dissolves.
Law without compassion enslaves.
Pesach calls us to hold both.

Arnie Draiman is a philanthropy consultant with over 25 years of experience guiding donors to make meaningful, effective, and impactful contributions. Known for his strategic approach, Arnie specializes in evaluating non-profit organizations, ensuring transparency, and helping donors achieve maximum value from their giving. He is a strong advocate for truth and integrity in philanthropy, emphasizing accountability and measurable outcomes. Arnie's expertise spans education, social justice, and humanitarian aid, making him a trusted resource for individuals, foundations, and organizations seeking to maximize their philanthropic goals.

Because We Were Strangers

Rabbi Dorit Edut

In the early part of our Passover *Seder*, just before the Four Questions, we lift the matzah and say,

> "Ha Lachma Anya – This is the bread of our affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let those who are hungry enter and eat with us; let those who are forlorn come and celebrate the Passover with us…."

It is a time for inviting guests to our homes for we are told then not only to remember the Exodus from Egypt in joy because of God's great care for our lives– but also to remember our very humble beginnings as a people.In fact, we are repeatedly told – more than 30 times in the Bible – that we are to behave towards others, especially the "strangers in our midst", with kindness and compassion, generosity and fairness – for after all "we were strangers in the Land of Egypt".

In other words, the experience of being "the other", the outsider is one that we must never forget.Certainly, this has been our position in many societies throughout much of the 2,000 years of our existence. But the value that we draw from this is not to embitter us or make us hate those who treated us this way; rather, we are to be sensitized to other human beings, especially

those who are oppressed or treated unfairly anywhere in the world.

Perhaps it is because of this background that Emma Lazarus, a young Jewish poetess in 1883, was so moved by the plight of the immigrants fleeing poverty and tyranny in Eastern Europe, that she wrote the poem engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty- "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free…."

On a personal level, I know that my own parents, Holocaust survivors, always referred to themselves as "refugees" and taught me to both be grateful for this haven offered by our American government, but also to be compassionate and generous to anyone else who we encountered who needed our help.

My parents were involved in various charitable organizations and always hosted guests for Passover Seders and other holidays, but we never knew who the needy person was and who was not since all were treated equally with respect and invited to participate in readings, discussions, and songs.

In fact, our Rabbis in the Talmud spent a lot of time discussing how to treat guests and were very specific about a few behavioral aspects.

The basis of this comes from a statement in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat which states "Hospitality to guests is even greater than

being in the Presence of God." Rabbi Yehuda explained this statement to mean that while the connection to the Divine Presence is limited because there is an unbridgeable distance between humans and God, yet we can connect more closely to other human beings who each embody the Divine Image. Thus, by welcoming guests, we truly honor the Divine Image!

While I was in rabbinic school, I had the chance to befriend and help an "undocumented immigrant" from Mexico. He was the 'super' of my apartment building in Manhattan and it was through him that I began to see the challenges he and others faced trying to live in the shadows.

He unsuccessfully tried to get citizenship status through several "auctions" and had no American family or spouse to even qualify him for a 'green card'. Even with the little that he had, he cleverly and generously figured out ways to help others, working within informal circles to obtain housing, clothing, jobs, and food.

I offered him Erev Shabbat meals and opened a savings account for him in return for his friendship and his teaching me the geography and street culture of Manhattan. When he lay dying from cancer, I was able to carry out his last wishes and ensure a dignified burial.

"*Ha Lachma Anya*" is a call from our Passover Haggadah to literally and figuratively open our doors and our hearts to the "others" in our midst,

recognizing their Divinely given humanity, offering them pathways to prosper, and including them as equals in our larger community.

Rabbi Dorit Edut (AJR '06) heads the Detroit Interfaith Outreach Network which helps families and children in Detroit and brings many faith groups together. She retired last June from her pulpit in Bay City, MI but continues to do private teaching and life-cycle events.

למען תזכור את יום צאתך ממצרים כל ימי חייך
so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live

The Day of Your Departure

Martin Herskovitz

The *Haggadah* cites the *midrash* of Ben Zoma on the verse in Deuteronomy:

> למען תזכור את יום צאתך ממצרים כל ימי חייך
> "so that you may remember the **day of your departure** from the land of Egypt as long as you live."[1]

Why does this verse specify remembering the day of departure and not the entire Egyptian narrative.

We focus on the day of departure because the nation of Israel was created specifically on the day that God redeemed us, as per the *Midrash*[2] on the verse :"Has any other god dared to take a nation out of another nation by means of trials, miraculous signs, wonders, war, a strong hand, a powerful arm, and terrifying acts? Yet that is what the LORD your God did for you in Egypt, right before your eyes."[3]

The *Midrash* explains the term " A nation out of another nation": that Israel was indistinguishable from the Egyptian people and did not deserve to be redeemed except for the covenant with Abraham. Thus the commandment is we must remember the specific day we left (יום צאתך)- every day of our lives.

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[1] Deuteronomy 3:16
[2] *Vayikra Rabba* 23:2
[3] Deuteronomy 4:34

But what is equally significant is that we are commanded in the verse to always remember the salvation, i.e the day of redemption but not the preceding trauma. This is echoed in God's commandment to us not to hold a grudge against the Egyptian despite the fact that they enslaved our people "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land.[4] Esau who threatened the existence of the entire Jewish nation when he tried to murder Jacob is seen as a brother. The Egyptians are seen as our hosts in their land and not a people that murdered our children and oppressed us. We are commanded not to remember these traumas but to let them go. Why are these traumatic memories forgotten? Why are we commanded to process these traumas and move on? Because trauma is antithetical to creating a covenantal community.

The covenantal community needs to move on with life to focus on its mission and not be obsessed with trauma of the past. Trauma no matter how significant does not determine our reaction to it or how we choose to remember it. It is the narrative we create in response to the trauma that determines if we will be able to overcome the loss and the pain and rebuild again. The Passover *Seder* is a ritual designed to process the collective trauma. It invites the participants to actively create a narrative starting with slavery and oppression, then progressing to liberation and nationhood, allowing them to confront past experiences and find meaning in their own lives. The Seder's unique structure, incorporating sensory experiences like food and

[4] Deuteronomy 23:7

song, and its emphasis on personal connection to the narrative, contribute to its therapeutic potential.

Our remembrance of redemption demonstrates how trauma is never inevitable and how traumatic memory can be transformed into a remembrance that unites. Memory as the Torah understands it is anything but a passive activity. We are who we are in no small part because of how we choose to let our memories affect us. This is a choice every one of us faces when confronted with our traumas. The remembrance of past redemptions tells us not to choose fear and isolation but to choose empathy and the connection to the covenantal community. Our current pain, as with our past trauma, must teach us to connect to the other and not to distance ourselves from them. It teaches us to choose the path of processing trauma and not to hold onto it. Every emigration is traumatic yet the Torah is telling us not to focus on the trauma but on the possibility.

Martin Herskovitz, from Rehovot, Israel, is a Spiegel fellow at Bar Ilan University and a poet. His book of poetry *Son of the Shoah*, and his endeavor *Creating Memory* deal with the creation of a personal and emotional narrative of Holocaust remembrance that facilitates grieving and the processing of intergenerational trauma.

Commanded to Love

Richard S. Moline

In a college course I was taking in world religions, I was explaining some aspect of Judaism (though I no longer remember exactly what it was). What I do remember is that a fellow student asked whether what I was describing was Jewish dogma.

I replied that Judaism does not really have dogma. What we have instead are *mitzvot* – things to *do*, not things to believe.

Moses Mendelssohn once suggests that the only true dogma in Judaism is that we do not have dogma. Solomon Schechter famously observed that nowhere in Torah are we commanded to believe in God—although the first of the Ten Commandments could lead us there. It wasn't until the twelfth century that Maimonides articulated a formal system of Jewish beliefs.

What the Torah primarily gives us are not doctrines, but *mitzvot*—commandments.

The *mitzvot* themselves fall into categories. Some can no longer be practiced because they were tied to the Temple in Jerusalem. Others apply only in the Land of Israel. Some are specific to priestly families, and some read others as gender specific.

Among all the commandments, one stands out as both simple and deeply perplexing:

the commandment to love.

Most *mitzvot* are concrete. They tell us to either perform a particular action or refrain from one. Love, however, is not an action. Love is emotional and personal.

The Torah explicitly commands love in three places (repeated in different forms elsewhere):

- "You shall neither take revenge nor bear a grudge against members of your people; you shall love (*v'ahavta*) your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18)
- "The foreigner who resides with you shall be as a native among you, and you shall love (*v'ahavta*) him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:34)
- "You shall love the Lord *(v'ahavta)* your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Nowhere are we commanded to love our parents or our children. Instead, we are commanded to love our neighbor, to love the stranger, and to love God.

What binds these three commandments together?

In Hebrew, the letter *vav* placed before a word can

serve different purposes. In biblical Hebrew it is sometimes called a *vav hahipuch*, a grammatical device that can reverse the tense of a verb—from past to future or from future to past. In modern Hebrew, the *vav* can simply mean "and." With a bit of interpretive license, we might see the *vav* as a connector linking these three commandments.

And you shall love your neighbor **and** love the stranger **and** love God.

The Torah commands us to love our neighbor and the stranger long before it commands us to love God. Perhaps that sequence is not accidental.

Maybe loving God does not begin with theology or ritual observance. Perhaps it begins with how we treat other human beings.

Only sixteen verses separate the commandment to love our fellow Israelites from the commandment to love the stranger. Judaism asks us to hold both truths at once.

Only when we fulfill these first two mitzvot—loving those who are like us and those who are not—can we begin to fulfill the third.

I do not want to suggest, as John Lennon does, that "all you need is love." Yet the Torah's message about how we treat others—including immigrants and strangers—is unmistakably clear.

To love God means to recognize the divine image in other people. Loving ourselves requires that we

also learn to love those who are not us. That is not always easy, but being Jewish has never been easy.

In Hebrew numerology, the letter *vav* has the numerical value of six. If we imagine each of these three commandments preceded by a *vav* — and add them together — we arrive at eighteen, the number associated with *chai*, the Hebrew word for life.

Perhaps the Torah is teaching us something profound.

The path to a fulfilling life, a fulfilling Jewish life, includes loving ourselves and our neighbors. It also involves loving those who are different, and ultimately, and only then, loving God.

This reflection was adapted from a Times of Israel Post which was first published on November 27, 2015.

Rich Moline is Director of Institutional Advancement at Chicago Jewish Day School. He dedicates this piece to his immigrant grandparents and great grandparents.

The Wandering (and Wondering) Jew

Darcy Grabenstein

I leave behind painful memories
of laboring in the hot Egyptian sun,
limestone dust clogging our lungs
snakes, scorpions and fear our constant
companions

I leave behind mounds of rubble
that were once holy altars
upon which sacrifices were made,
now walls, promises and faith broken

I leave behind chimneys
sending smoke signals of the carnage,
babes wrenched from mothers' arms
pleading eyes, heart-wrenching wails, deafening
silence

I leave behind Israeli commuter buses
charred shells of their former selves
as righteous souls comb the area
for bits, pieces, remnants of what once was

I leave behind the Tree of Life synagogue
ripped open at the seams,
survivors ripping their clothes in mourning
a community, a people, a world torn apart

I leave behind a music festival
turned macabre by invaders
then the war to weed out terror
gutting Gaza and our hearts

Ahead of me, my path is strewn
with obstacles of hatred
Where will I find a safe haven?
Who will welcome me with open arms?

I am tempted to turn my head
and look back from where I came
but I force myself to focus
on what is yet to come.

Darcy Grabenstein's Jewish-themed poetry often has been published on Ritualwell.com, in Poetry Super Highway's 25th annual *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) issue, and in three holiday supplements of the Academy for Jewish Religion. She currently co-leads a Jewish Writers' Circle, sponsored by Ritualwell.

New Sonnet for Lady Liberty

— *after The New Colossus,* Emma Lazarus (1849-1887)

Steve Pollack

Emma's sonnet hails not conquering limbs
Penned not on warship, by dawn's early light
Star-spangled witness to perilous fight
Welcome sings instead, not heroic hymn
A bold idea, king's tyranny dissolve
French art conceived for centennial day
This copper gift graces a sea-washed door
More perfect union our noble resolve.

On stone pedestal, million-dollar views
My grandparents remember her mild eyes
Safe port, her flaming torch does symbolize
Visitors now pose in tears, hear hard news.

Mother of Exiles, you watch history
Do you see borders, smell hypocrisy?

Steve Pollack was named 2025 Montgomery County (PA) Poet Laureate. His debut chapbook, *L'dor Vador– From Generation to Generation*, was published by Finishing Line Press. He sings bass with Nashirah: the Jewish Chorale of Greater Philadelphia. He and Linda live in suburban Philly, where they celebrate their 57th wedding anniversary later this year.

The Basket

Rabbi-Cantor Michael McCloskey

My father is a wandering migration[5]
My God chooses dislocation[6]
disintegration,
vivification
And reintegration,
Again and again

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[5] וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ׃
The Unconditional said to Abram, “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you” — Genesis 12:1

וַיַּעֲבֹר אַבְרָם בָּאָרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם שְׁכֶם עַד אֵלוֹן מוֹרֶה וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי אָז בָּאָרֶץ׃
וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה הַנִּרְאֶה אֵלָיו׃
וַיַּעְתֵּק מִשָּׁם הָהָרָה מִקֶּדֶם לְבֵית־אֵל וַיֵּט אָהֳלָה בֵּית־אֵל מִיָּם וְהָעַי מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּבֶן־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה׃
וַיִּסַּע אַבְרָם הָלוֹךְ וְנָסוֹעַ הַנֶּגְבָּה׃ `
Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, at the terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land.
The Unconditional appeared to Abram and said, “I will assign this land to your offspring.” And he built an altar there to GOD who had appeared to him.
From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to The Unconditional and invoked the Unconditional by name. Then Abram journeyed by stages toward the Negeb.

[6] The Kabbalists believed in the efficacy of dislocation, particularly what they called gerishin, self imposed wanderings in solidarity with Shekinah, exiled and separated from her sefirotic counterparts. See Tomer Devorah 9:2

My God is a Queen weeping by a wall[7],
A builder[8] of
cosmos
and people,
A container for liberation[9].

If you were a brick
In this wall,
You'd feel
how her every tear
is a torrent
as vast as the sea,
how the mortar[10]
baked in frozen ovens[11]
and blessed
by tyrants
bubbles forth

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[7] אָמַר רַב אַחָא, לְעוֹלָם אֵין הַשְּׁכִינָה זָזָה מִכּוֹתֶל מַעֲרָבִי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שיר השירים ב, ט): הִנֵּה זֶה עוֹמֵד אַחַר כָּתְלֵנוּ
Rabbi Aha said: The Shekhinah never has moved away from the Western Wall, as it is stated [Song of Songs 2:9] “Behold, this one stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice”.

[8] Playing with the idea of the Upper and Lower Mothers, Binah and Shekhinah in Kabbalah. Though Hokmah is the Intention and Plan to Create, Binah is the actual Creator in an actional sense and is origin of redemption. See Zohar: Introduction 4:14

[9] בינה שהיא סוד הגאולה והחירות וכל מיני הישועות
Binah, who is the secret of redemption, freedom, and all types of liberation. See Sha’arei Orah: Eighth Gate, Third Sefirah

[10] וַיְמָרְרוּ֙ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶ֔ם בַּעֲבֹדָ֥ה קָשָׁ֖ה בְּחֹ֑מֶר וּבִלְבֵנִ֔ים וּבְכָל־עֲבֹדָ֖ה בַּשָּׂדֶ֑ה אֵ֚ת כָּל־עֲבֹדָתָ֔ם אֲשֶׁר־עָבְד֥וּ בָהֶ֖ם בְּפָֽרֶךְ׃
the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field —Exodus 1:14

[11] ICE

with menstrual blood[12],
covenantal blood[13],
Nile blood[14]
seeping into the cracks
so that the light
gets in[15].

We remember how we were trafficked in
Egypt[16],
how our uncle
cheated us of our wages[17]
and sought to do us violence[18].

We have been saved by stories
of the wiliness

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[12] There are places in the Zohar where Shekhinah is characterized as a menstruating woman, as contaminated with uncleanness and forces of the Sitra Ahra, the other side. This subverts that image, imagining the menstrual blood as a powerful and cleansing force.

[13] There's a tradition, often unquoted, that when the Israelites smeared blood upon the lintels of their doors in Egypt, the blood consisted of blood of the paschal lamb, of circumcision, and menstruation.

[14] צִוָּה יְהוָה וַיַּרֶם בַּמַּטֶּה וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר וַיֵּעָשׂוּ־כֵן מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר בִּיְאֹר לְעֵינֵי פַּרְעֹה וּלְעֵינֵי עֲבָדָיו וַיֵּהָפְכוּ כָּל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר לְדָם׃
Moses and Aaron did just as GOD commanded: he lifted up the rod and struck the water in the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh and his courtiers, and all the water in the Nile was turned into blood — Exodus 7:20

[15] See Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem"

[16] See Genesis 12:16

[17] Genesis 31:41

[18] According to some interpretations, including the Haggadah of Passover, Laban is the Aramean who sought to destroy Jacob/Israel. When Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and family flee from Padan Aram, after Laban cheats Jacob of his wages year after year, he pursues them with an entourage of men and the threat of violence, which is only averted through Rachel's cunning and God's warning to him. See Genesis 31:29

of women,
robbing their fathers of their idols[19],
waiting
by waters[20]
and borders
for children
in the bulrushes[21],
By sisters[22]
and dreamers
who persisted
and resisted.

When you stand
indignant
by the wall of the prison
You'll see them

When you enter
the song circle
in Minneapolis
or St. Louis
you'll hear them

When you
love
the stranger
like
you love
your self[23],
that old wicked wall

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[19] Genesis 31:19
[20] Exodus 2:6
[21] Exodus 2:3
[22] See Exodus 2:4 and Talmud Bavli Sotah 12a
[23] Leviticus 19:34

of the heart
And hubris
will collapse
and all of the babies
buried in brick[24]
the whips of oppressors
and stench
of state-sanctioned violence
will flow out
And we remember…

That our story begins with migrants
God herself is a migrant[25]
and a stranger[26],That fearful for his life
our forefather trafficked
His wife[27]
How fearful for her prominence
Sarah trafficked Hagar[28].
Fearful for his life,
The Midianite priest
took in a refugee[29]
hunted by the crown
Fearful for her life
his daughter married
the refugee
who intervened
on her behalf[30]

[24] Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 48:18
[25] Shekhinah, as mentioned above wanders along with Jewish people on their journeys
[26] God is the ultimate other
[27] Genesis 12:16
[28] Genesis 16:2
[29] Exodus 2:21
[30] Exodus 2:17

Fearful for their lives,
They stood outside detention centers,
Fearful for their lives,
They "went out to their brethren"[31]
Fearful for their lives,
They "turned here and there",
menschen in a place
of diminished humanity

We bring our first fruits[32],
A harvest of vigilance,
Empathy,
Origin stories,
And stranger-love.
All in one basket[33],
Will you reach out your hand to take it?

Rabbi-Cantor Michael McCloskey, AJR '23, of Temple Emeth, Chestnut Hill. MA, is proud to teach at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Current secretary of the Cantors Assembly, he is published poet, blogger, and essayist.

[31] Exodus 2:11

[32] See Deuteronomy 26:2. The offering of the first fruits is accompanied by a recounting of oral history about the trials of being an immigrant and is the beginning of the Maggid/Story section of the Haggadah of Passover.

[33] A reference both to the basket in which one would place one's first fruits and also to the redemptive basket or ark in which Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and chose to have compassion upon him, rescue him, and ultimately, adopt him.

The Home We Take With Us

Rabbi Charles E. Savenor

At the heart of *Maggid* we declare: *"Arami oved avi."* Resisting simplicity, this phrase can mean, "An Aramean sought to destroy my father," or "My father was a wandering Aramean." The Haggadah expands upon the former, recounting threat and vulnerability. Yet the latter has echoed through Jewish memory as well.

Our ancestors were sadly accustomed to wandering. Displacement endangers the body as much as it unsettles the soul. To wander is to live with uncertainty and fills the heart with questions about belonging and, most painfully, whether the Covenant still travels with us.

Before Sinai, before kingship, before the Temple, there was movement. "*Lech Lecha"*: Our origins are rooted not in permanence but in pathways. We leave our parent's homes. We leave Egypt. We wander in the wilderness. Even the declaration brought with first fruits compresses our identity into a pattern of movements: wandering, descent, oppression, and redemption. While Jewish history unfolds through migration and displacement, the *brith*/ Covenant is never abandoned.

Exile forced our ancestors to discover that holiness is not confined to geography. When the

First Temple fell and our people were carried to Babylon, it could have marked the end. Instead, Judaism became portable. Prayer replaced sacrifice. Study stood above sovereignty. The home became sanctified as an incubator of sacred responsibility.

When a later generation returned to Israel and laid the cornerstone of the Second Temple, the Book of Ezra reads: "And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former Temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this Temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping" (Ezra 3:11–13). In this scene of mingled sound, some wept, remembering what had been lost. Others shouted for joy at what might yet be built. The noise of sorrow and hope blended together until no one could distinguish one from the other.

Tonight's Seder preserves this layered consciousness. We recline like free people, yet we lift the bread of affliction. We dip foods into salt water, recalling the tears of sorrow as much as the those of gratitude for redemption tasted. Like the generation of Ezra, we hold grief and hope in a single breath.

In different eras, Jews recognized symbols of hope in the lands to which they journeyed. For many who crossed oceans in earlier generations,

the image of Lady Liberty's torch lifted in a distant harbor felt like a heartening sign that wandering might lead to dignity rather than despair. Such symbols did not replace Jerusalem. They did not dissolve longing. But they reflected an ancient conviction that light can guide a people through uncertainty toward possibility.

Each year we speak as wanderers even when we sit securely at our tables, echoed by the sentiments of *The Lord of the Rings*'s author, J.R.R Tolkien: "Not all those who wander are lost."

Passover does not allow comfort to erase memory. It insists that we begin our story with migration and displacement. In doing so, it transforms vulnerability into covenantal resilience. Covenant grounds us before geography did, and its promise orients us in a way that borders never could.

We conclude the Seder with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem." Across centuries of wandering, we embrace that Jewish life can be characterized by perpetual motion and longing. And yet we are never without home, because Covenant and hope travel with us wherever we wander.

Rabbi Charles E. Savenor is the Executive Director of Civic Spirit. Founded in 2017, Civic Spirit provides training in civic education to Jewish, Catholic, and Christian day schools to prepare students to be informed and engaged members of American democracy. Before Civic Spirit, he worked for as the Director of Congregational Education at Park Avenue Synagogue in New York.

Wandering and Wondering

Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein

My father was a wandering Aramean
My mother, too.
Wandering and wondering.
Daring to hope,
Full of bravado and courage,
Not knowing
Where were they going.
Did they even know?
They left, with just a few.
People. Relatives. Friends. Others.
Pots. Pans. Linen. Jewelry. A samovar.
Candlesticks. Kiddush Cups. Tambourines.

Our parents. Grandparents. Great-Grandparents.
As far back as we can remember.
We are a people of wandering.
Of wondering.
Of immigrants, of sojourners, of strangers.
We were strangers in the land of Egypt.
With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
God took us out of Egypt.
Out of the narrow places.
All of us.
Each of us.
You, me, the mixed multitude.

Therefore, we are told.

We are commanded
To remember that
We were slaves in Egypt.
Therefore, we are told,
We are commanded,
All of us.
Each of us.
Even today.
Especially today.
Not once, not twice,
36 times
Take care of the widow, the orphan, the sojourner
The most vulnerable amongst us.
That is the real message of Passover.
My mother and my father were wandering Arameans.
Wandering and wondering.
I wonder too.

Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein was ordained by the Academy for Jewish Religion in 2010. She serves as the spiritual leader of Congregation Kneseth Israel in Elgin, IL. She is the president of the Association of Rabbis and Cantors, (ARC), the professional alumni association of AJR. She serves on a volunteer basis as a police chaplain and on several local boards like St Joseph Hospital. She has worked for many years on immigration issues, including with Centro de Informacion, and interned with Refugee Immigration Ministry.

From Lech Lecha to Exodus: Our First Immigration Stories

Rabbi/Cantor Idan Irelander

The story of the Jewish people begins with a journey. In the Book of Genesis, God calls Abraham with the words "*Lech Lecha*"—"Go forth from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house." It is more than a geographical command. It is a summons to transformation—to leave the familiar and step into an uncertain future guided by faith.

In many ways, then, Abraham becomes the first immigrant of the Jewish story. He leaves home without knowing the destination, trusting that the journey itself is part of a Divine purpose. His path is not simple; it is filled with uncertainty, challenge, and confrontation. Yet Abraham responds with courage and trust, setting in motion a story that will shape generations.

Importantly, Abraham does not journey alone. He brings with him his family and those who share his vision. From the very beginning, the Jewish journey is communal. Our identity is not built around solitary travelers, but around a people moving together—bound by shared values, traditions, and hopes for a better future,

and a yearning to be accepted by people already established.

This theme finds full expression in the story of Passover. At the *Seder* table we declare: "We were strangers in the land of Egypt." The Exodus is not merely a tale of liberation; it is also a story of migration. A people leaves the land of oppression and sets out toward an unknown future. The memory of that experience becomes central to Jewish ethics. Because we know what it means to be strangers, the Torah repeatedly commands us to treat the stranger with compassion and dignity.

For many Jews today, this narrative resonates deeply. In countries like the United States, most of us, or our parents or grandparents, arrived as immigrants seeking safety and opportunity. Our family stories echo the journeys of Abraham and the Israelites: leaving behind the known, in order to build a new life in a new land.

But the spiritual message of *Lech Lecha* and Passover goes even further. The journey is not only about movement across borders; it is about the moral responsibility we carry with us along the way. While Abraham's path was rooted in faith and openness, the Exodus, experienced by Abraham's descendants, shaped a people committed to justice, compassion, and communal responsibility.

Passover reminds us that human beings are often travelers, seeking dignity, belonging, and hope.

The Jewish tradition transforms that experience into an ethical mandate: to build communities rooted in freedom, empathy, hospitality, and mutual respect.

Initially inspired by Abraham's courage to "go forth," and then further guided by the memory we revisit annually at each *Seder*, that we too were once strangers, we continue our journey together, and remain open and accepting to others who are trying to do the same.

Even when the path is uncertain, may our shared values—faith, kindness, and responsibility for one another, and for greater society—continue to help lead us toward a future of unity, peace, and blessing for generations to come.

Rabbi/Cantor Idan Irelander is the founding rabbi of Congregation Ahavat Olam in North Andover, MA. He received his Rabbinic Ordination from the Academy for Jewish Religion, a Cantorial Ordination and Masters of Jewish Education (MJEd) from Hebrew College, and a Bachelors of Composition and Film Scoring from Berklee College of Music.

I Am Yosef: Reclaiming the Ancestral Chain in the Land of the Stranger

Or Caduri

We begin the *Seder* with the words "*Arami oved avi*" - "My father was a wandering Aramean" (Deut. 26:5). The *Haggadah* turns this verse into the opening of our story: displacement, descent, suffering, and eventual redemption. But long before the nation went down to Egypt as slaves, one man went down alone as a stranger: Joseph, sold by his brothers, carried into *Mitzrayim,* renamed Tzofnat Paaneach, yet never losing the inner name "Yosef."

Joseph's journey is the first full arc of the stranger in our sacred memory. He is the *ger* - the vulnerable newcomer - who knows the *nefesh* (the inner soul-pain) of the stranger, "for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). Betrayed, enslaved, falsely accused, imprisoned, isolated - he could have become bitter. Instead, he becomes *Mashbir* - the provider who sustains life (Gen. 42:6). The Torah tells us three times: "*HaShem* was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2, 21, 23) - even in the pit, in Potiphar's house, in prison. He never forgot who he was. When the moment came, he revealed himself with tears: "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" (Gen. 45:3). In that cry, the stranger reclaims his name and his rightful place in his ancestral chain.

My grandfather was also named Joseph. Slightly before the founding of the State of Israel he arrived from Iraq, part of the great return. But economic hardship - the same pressure that once drove Jacob's sons to Egypt - pushed him onward. He left a young wife and two small children to seek livelihood in Brazil, joining many Iraqi Jews who traded in textiles there. What was meant to be temporary became permanent. He built a new life, a new family, and never returned.

It would be easy to judge in retrospect. But perhaps it was precisely this willingness to go into the unknown to provide - to become, in a small way, a *mashbir* for his family - that echoed in my father. He served twenty years in the Israeli Air Force as an airplane mechanic, laboring hard to support us. And yet something in our family story remained incomplete, a longing that was never fully resolved.

I was born in Israel in 1993. At eighteen, like my grandfather and biblical Joseph, I too left Israel. I wandered for years around the world in search of meaning, studying the spiritual traditions of east and west, only to return - as so many of our ancestors have - to the most self-evident truth: belonging to the Jewish people.

And now, I could mourn the fact that I am not raising my family in the Land of Israel in the physical sense. But I am not sad; I know this, too, is from God. There is work for me to do where I am placed.

I also know in my heart that from the perspective of the Jewish soul throughout history, we have been everywhere. We have watched empires rise and fall.

We go where we are sent - knowingly or unknowingly, in acceptance or while kicking and screaming. It makes no difference.

Like Joseph in Egypt, wherever we land we are called to elevate sparks of holiness, to contribute to the flourishing of the societies around us, to become - in whatever measure is given us - *Mashbirim*, while still tending to *Am Yisrael* in our hearts and actions.

While some of us are entrusted, like Jacob (Israel) and Judah, to tend the Holy Land directly. Others, like Abraham or Joseph, are also asked to raise up the world.

Yet wherever we are, we can never be fully ourselves until we can cry out, as Joseph finally did, "I am Yosef."

We must ask, with an open and perhaps broken heart:

"Is my father still alive (within me)?" - or in other words: "*Is the chain of my ancestors still unbroken within me?*"

Or Caduri is a consultant specializing in Jewish educational strategy, healthy workplace cultures, and wellbeing for students and employees. A seasoned spiritual educator of *Kabbalah*, he integrates ancient wisdom with modern wellness practices to empower students and seekers on their personal and spiritual journeys.

For You Know the Soul of the Stranger

Rabbi Adrienne Rubin

"My father was a wandering Aramean…"

With these words, the Haggadah reminds us that even before Egypt, we were strangers. Our ancestors migrated from place to place, looking for food, looking for home. We were immigrants. We grew numerous in Egypt and became feared, enslaved, oppressed.

We are reminded of this again and again in our Torah: "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the soul of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)

Our Haggadah inserts us into the story. We were wanderers. We were strangers. We were outsiders. We were feared. We were distrusted. We were oppressed.

The words of Emma Lazarus, engraved on a plaque inside the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, beckon to immigrants arriving in the United States:

> "Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The statue and the message have represented welcome and freedom, opportunity and hope for decades.

Yet our immigrants were not always welcomed. Even though we are a nation of immigrants, almost every group of newcomers has been subjected to distrust, discrimination and violence by people who arrived – as immigrants – only a generation earlier.

The Irish. The Catholics. The Chinese. The Italians. The Haitians. The Somalis. And, of course, the Jews.

Again and again, immigrants have found themselves strangers in the land of the "free".

As descendants of a wandering Aramean and of the slaves in Egypt, we know the heart of a stranger. We know what happens when rumors begin, when suspicion changes to scapegoating. Our people bear the scars of accusations of dual loyalty, blood libels and world domination conspiracy theories. Our people suffer from blame for economic collapse, political upheaval, unpopular wars, and even the death of Jesus.

When immigrants are targeted, we know what comes next. No matter the time, no matter the group, no matter our politics, we know the dangers. When any group of immigrants is treated as homogeneous and demonized as being

dangerous and different, the people themselves become targets. They are threatened. They are attacked. Words are powerful. Inflammatory words are even more so.

This is precisely why our Torah commands us to not only tell the story but to see ourselves in it.

"My father was a wandering Aramean…"

In our Torah, these words appear in *Parashat Ki Tavo,* and are to be recited when the first fruits are brought to the Temple. They remind us that caring for the strangers among us is not optional. We cannot stay silent when immigrants are demonized or discriminated against, not just because we Jews are so often next in line, but because our Torah tells us that we must not only stand up for the stranger. For generations, rabbis have noticed how frequently this commandment appears. In our Talmud, Rabbi Eliezer teaches that the Torah warns us thirty-six times, and perhaps even forty-six times, not to oppress the stranger. (*Bava Metzia* 59b)

We must <u>love</u> the stranger, <u>all</u> strangers, because we were strangers in the land of Egypt. We, too, know what it is like to be immigrants. And this knowledge requires us to give dignity and hope to people seeking a better life in a land not their own.

Tonight, as we remember our wandering ancestors who were enslaved in Egypt, our *Haggadah* asks us to see ourselves in their story,

as if we personally went out from Egypt. To do that honestly is to remember what it means to be the stranger and use that to guide our hearts and actions.

May we speak up when people are lumped together and stereotyped.

May we refuse to stand idly by when strangers are vilified or mistreated.

And may we remember and fulfill the *mitzvah*: you shall love the stranger, for you know the soul of the stranger, having been yourselves strangers in the land of Egypt.

Kein y'hi ratzon.
May it be so.

Rabbi Adrienne Rubin is the Rabbi at Congregation Bnai Shalom in Easton, PA. A trained opera singer, she previously served for four years as the Rabbi at Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael in Springfield, NJ, and for 24 years as the Cantorial Soloist at Temple Micah, in Lawrenceville, NJ. Rabbi Adrienne lives in Princeton, NJ, with her husband Doug, their son Elian, and their two cats, Nya and Ninja.

Torah and the Stranger

Rabbi David Cavill

Introduction: When I was ordained as a rabbi in 2017, refugees and immigration issues were at the forefront of the news. America, the great "melting pot" described by playwright Israel Zangwill, didn't seem to be melting. It was becoming increasingly difficult for those seeking safety to find refuge in this country. Deportations, which had peaked at 409,859 in 2012 and then declined, were rising again starting in 2016.

Public discourse does not always address issues like this with nuance or a recognition of our shared humanity. I wanted my first public words as a rabbi to speak to this reality, and these issues, through Torah. Over and over again, the Torah commands us to be kind to the stranger - no less than thirty-six times, according to one tradition.[34] The Torah's repetition is prescient. Immigration remains at the center of our national attention. In 2025, there were over 600,00 deportations with more than 1.6 million others losing legal status. I am grateful to share the speech I gave at the AJR ordination ceremony in 2017:

> The first of my ancestors to arrive in this country came in the last decade of the nineteenth century, fifty years

[34] Bava Metzia 59b

before AJR was founded. From the window of the ballroom where we commemorated the Academy's sixtieth anniversary a few months ago, I could see Ellis Island across the water, the very place where my family had entered this country—where so many of our families entered this country. *They* were forced from their homes for being Jews while *we* were celebrating a milestone in American Jewish life. I was struck then, as I am now, by how far away that felt but how close it still is. In the 1960's more of my family came to these shores from other countries and for different reasons. אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי. My father was a wandering Aramean.[35]

At this, our חג הסמיכה, our celebration of ordination, we carry on a tradition that began with a community of refugees and immigrants, Israelites and a mixed multitude of others, who fled Egypt with only those things they could carry. Poised at the foot of a mountain in a foreign land, they stood awestruck in dynamic encounter with the Creator of the Universe and from that encounter, the people and the Divine birthed Torah into the world, a remedy for the darkness of human suffering, a legacy for generations to come.

בְּכָל-דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת-עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

> In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as having personally left Egypt.[36]

לֹא אֶת-אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בִּלְבָד גָּאַל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, אֶלָּא אַף אוֹתָנוּ גָּאַל עִמָּהֶם

[35] Deuteronomy 26:5
[36] Mishnah Pesachim 10:5, Hagaddah

Not only did the Holy Blessed One redeem our ancestors, but also us together with them.[37]

Again and again the Torah directs us to offer kindness to the stranger, to remember that we were, are, and ever shall be strangers in a land not our own. The Torah invites us to stand in our brokenness at the foot of the mountain, to take notice of the world as it is, and to imagine the world as it can be. To make a place for every person dwelling somewhere but does not yet feel they are home.

Compassionate One, פתח ליבינו בתורתך, open our hearts with your Torah so that we merit the fulfilment of Your prophet's vision that if we do not oppress the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow, follow after false gods, or shed innocent blood in this place, You will dwell with us in this place, in the land you gave to our ancestors forever and ever.[38]

Rabbi David Cavill, MDiv was ordained at AJR in 2017 and serves in its administration. He lives in Queens, NY.

[37] Haggadah, Magid
[38] Jeremiah 7:6-7

Jacob in Egypt: An Immigration Saga

Rabbi David Hartley Mark

"My father was a wandering Aramean…."
–Deut. 26:5 & *Pesach Hagadah*

Scene: The Royal Egyptian Immigration Bureau during the reign of Pharaoh Seti I (1291-1278 BCE). Enter Jacob the Patriarch, his wives Leah, Bilha and Zilpa, and most of his children and grandchildren, with Reuven, his firstborn, by his side. A Sentry confronts them.

Sentry: Hold! This is His Majesty's Immigration Office and cannot be entered by just anyone. Give me some identification, Hebrew. Do you have an appointment? Take a number at the desk.

(Jacob, confused, goes through the pockets of his robe and cloak. Leah steps forward to assist him.)

Leah: Sir Sentry, I am Jacob's wife and can give you whatever information you seek. We are applying to become Egyptian subjects.

Sentry: What is your home country*? (Clerk #1 steps up and listens in)*

Leah: We are former inhabitants of Canaan. We left there because the famine sent by our God was oppressive.

Clerk #1: I will take it from here, Corporal Amenhotep. *(To Leah and Jacob)* Do you have a copy of Immigration Application #XZY-431?

Leah *(removing paper from her sack):* Here it is.

Clerk #1: This is neither right nor proper. No: this is a papyrus signed by one Joseph son of Jacob *(to Clerk #2):* Isn't he that Hebrew fellow, the jailbird interpreter of dreams of whom His Majesty is so fond?

Jacob: Yes; he is my son. He is Grand Vizier of the Kingdom, and second only to the Pharaoh.

Clerk #2: H'm. *(Whispering to Clerk #1)* I have heard that he is not too popular at the Royal Court. The Pharaoh's nobles hate him. I would watch my back if I were you, Clerk Amun.

Leah: Is there a problem? My nephew Joseph told me that he would meet us here today. We would have been sooner, but there was an Amalekite attack as we were departing the Land of Moab. Could we send him a message at the Pharaoh's Palace, perhaps?

Clerk #1: Madam, I am required to speak only with your husband, not a mere wife—certainly not one so lowly as yourself, a Canaanite female. You, Sirrah *(speaking to Jacob*)—could you come into my cubicle and answer some questions?

Jacob: I will do my best, but the heat of the day is oppressive to me, and I am not as young as I once was, when I crossed the Jordan River armed with my bow and my sword. I—

Reuven *(coming up alongside to support his father*): Sir Clerk, may I be of assistance? I am slated to be head of our tribal family when my father—long life to him!—is no more. I can assist with any forms you like.

Clerk #2: *(going through Reuven's papers)* No, I am afraid that these won't do, not at all. Did our embassy at Beth-El not inform you what papers and official documents you would need?

Levi *(another son):* These are all we have.

Meanwhile, the press of Israelites into the Immigration Bureau becomes overwhelming for the Egyptians, and the guard-sentries move to close and lock the doors.

Sentry #1: Hold, Hebrews! I must ask you to peaceably leave this Royal Bureau Office and return to your homeland. We cannot possibly admit you; you are undocumented and might be an infection in the midst of our peaceable kingdom. Leave now, or we will be forced to expel you!

The Sentries press upon the Sons of Jacob, who draw their own clubs and staves. Suddenly, a trumpet-blast is heard:

Joseph's Herald: Make way, make way, for Zaphnat-Paneah, Royal Minister of Agriculture and second only to His Majesty, King Seti! Make way!

Joseph enters, and all the Egyptian officials bow to the ground.

Jacob *(approaching Joseph):* My son, how I have longed to see you. It's been so long….

Joseph *(to the Clerks*): Please expedite my family's quick absorption as Egyptian subjects. They will settle near me, in the Land of Goshen.

Clerk #1 to #2: See how that nervy Hebrew throws his weight around? I don't like it; no, not at all….

(To Be Continued)

Rabbi David Hartley Mark was born and raised on NYC's Lower East Side, and attended Hebrew Day School, Yeshiva Univ. HS, and Yeshiva Univ., where he learned English, Bible, and Jewish Education degrees. He attended the CUNY Graduate Center, and received both an MA and M.Phil. in English Literature, with a concentration in 17th Century, John Milton, and the Romantic Poets. David also received semicha/rabbinical ordination from the Academy for Jewish Religion, Yonkers, NY. He has also attended the Hebrew College in Brookline, MA, where he received a Certificate in Advanced Hebrew School Administration. David serves Temple Sholom of Pompano Beach, FL; prior, he served pulpits in Warren, NJ, Fayetteville, NC, and Portsmouth, NH.

We are Here for You

Rabbi Maralee Gordon

No One wants to leave
That place where they feel comfortable
The womb
The snuggle of the grandparents
Your childhood home
The summer cottage
Your hometown
The big city you love

Until:
They kick you out
There isn't enough food
There isn't enough love
There isn't enough to go around

Your home is destroyed
It isn't safe
Your neighborhood is destroyed
They come knocking on your door
Wanting you to kill
Demanding your body

You leave, you flee, you escape, you sidle out,
packing just enough
not enough
aiming for that uncle and aunt,
sister, brother
neighbor

STRANGER who will take you in
Stranger who will accept you as a neighbor

Desperate for a haven!

Will we be there for you?

For we are taught: "When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall do them no wrong. You shall treat the stranger as the native among you, and you shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Mindful of our biblical teachings, mindful of our heritage of being a stranger, mindful of our humanity, we are here for you.

Maralee Gordon, AJR '01, serves as the Rabbi of McHenry County Jewish Congregation in Crystal Lake, Illinois, when she is not visiting her children and grandchildren in Katzrin, Israel, Melbourne, Australia, and Del Mar, California. For thirteen years she visited immigrants detained by ICE in the county jail and is now part of a local Rapid Response Team to protect immigrants from abuse and deportation.

Egypt

Alex Lazarus-Klein

Leaving is not our choice.
Neither is staying.

The upright pyramids gleam like sand.
The sand gleams like fallen pyramids.

We gather belongings.
Count heads.
Approach the door.
We curse, bless, cough.

Taskmasters steady whips.
The eyes of our neighbors stare.

Pharaoh may catch us.
Elijah cannot save us.

We walk through the threshold.
There is no returning.

Leaving is not our choice.

Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein serves as the rabbi of Congregation Shir Shalom in Buffalo, NY.

Not Netivot HaShalom

Rhonda Rosenheck

No
forced march,
trail of tears, or
expulsion
ever guided us
onto God's peaceful paths.

Rhonda Rosenheck, M.Ed., is a poet, writer, and retired Jewish educator who lives in New York's Capital Region.

Our Ingrained Obligation

Rabbi Maralee Gordon

In *Parashat Bo,* in chapters 12 and 13 of the Book of Exodus, as the Israelites prepare to escape their oppressive lives in Egypt, three times it is written that you shall tell your child about God redeeming you from Egypt with a strong arm and an outstretched hand, and a fourth time in Deuteronomy 6:21. *Higad'dita l'bincha*, tell your child, evolved into the *Haggadah*, our Book of Telling, recounting to our children and reminding ourselves of our origins and our obligations. We devote the Holy Festival of *Pesach*/Passover to remembering our beginnings in slavery from which we were redeemed. If that were the only time in the year that we would remember our beginnings in the degradation of slavery and our glorious redemption… *Dayenu*!

If that were not enough, at the start of every *Shabbat* and each of the three Festivals of the year, when in the *Kiddush* we proclaim the holiness of the day and we cite God's resting following the six days of creation as a rationale, the Exodus from Egypt, i.e. redemption from slavery, is a second rationale mentioned… *Dayenu*!

If that were not enough, twice a day, every day of the year, we say *Sh'ma uvirchotecha*, the three biblical paragraphs of the *Sh'ma* and its

surrounding blessings. Twice a day in the blessing following *Sh'ma,* acknowledging the Divine redemption of our ancestors from slavery in Egypt, from which we refer to our God as Redeemer of Israel… *Dayenu*!

If that were not enough, in the yearly cycle of our reading the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, we find our experience of slavery in Egypt cited 36 (and some say 46) times as the impetus for and **obligation** to lifting up those who are oppressed—by slavery, poverty, and non-citizenship… *Dayenu*!

This is *dayenu,* enough--for us to automatically step forward to protect and raise up the immigrant residing among us, to resist efforts to imprison, abuse, and deport the vulnerable among us. We are *commanded* to do so—it's a *mitzvah*--and through the brilliance of our sages, that lesson sinks in every day of the year. May we continue to step up to the task.

Each Day Is a New Struggle

Rabbi Emily Howard Meyer

Each day is a new struggle:

- We don't know the language. My children are in school, but they say the teacher wants to speak with me.
- Work is hard to come by. I do not have papers.
- How can I feed my family? I make so little.
- Rain, wind, snow, hail. All penetrates our roof.
- There was an accident. Do I go to the hospital?
- Each night I wake up in fear and sadness. Our journey was hard. We left our family. We are alone.
- People are angry at us. We are trying to live. Why do they hate us?
- The media says that people are after us. Should we even leave home for work, for school, or to get food?
- My friend was deported. Who will be next?
- There is no help. There is no hope.

I look up to the sky, from where will our help come?

- If only someone would look kindly upon us.
- If only someone would see we are trying to make a life.
- If only someone would give us grace.
- If only someone would hold out their hand.
- If only someone would see that we too are human.

It would be enough.

Rabbi Emily Howard Meyer, AJR '25, serves as a chaplain for the Charles E. Smith Life Communities, and as rabbi for the Revitz House in Rockville, MD.

We Must Do Enough

Ray Goldberg

> In loving memory of my mother, Malka; and her parents Jechil (pronounced Yechiel) and Szejncia (Shayn-tse) Dobekirer.

Had my grandfather, as a soldier in the Polish army, clashed with German troops and merely survived, *that would not have been enough.*

Had he been put on a train as a prisoner of war, in an unlocked and unguarded rail car, and jumped off without serious injury, *that would not have been enough.*

Had friends and acquaintances hidden him during the day, enabling him to hide from the Germans and Russians pursuing him as a Labor Zionist leader, and enabling him to make his way home to Vilna during the night-time over a period of months, *that, too, would not have been enough.*

Had my grandmother and my mother (aged 5) traveled by train to Kovno to obtain transit visas from Japanese consul Sempo Sugihara (against orders, sacrificing his career) so that they could cross the Soviet Union into Japan, *that, too, would not have been enough.*

Had the family ridden the Trans-Siberian railroad for nearly two weeks, with valuables sewn into my mother's coat, and arrived safely in Japan, *that, too, would not have been enough.*

Had the family found refuge in Shanghai, China, arriving on New Year's Day in 1942, after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and grew concerned about the presence of so many foreigners in their midst, *that, too, would not have been enough.*

Had the Mir Yeshiva been based in Shanghai, and issued the family visas to the United States in 1948, because my grandfather (a secular Jew to his core) always figured out how to benefit from connections and "working the system", *that, too, would not have been enough.*

Had a cousin in Chicago taken them in, and my grandfather found that Chicago was too small for him, and the family therefore moved to New York, *that, too, would not have been enough.*

None of these was enough by itself, but all of them put together – whether by assistance from others, by luck, or maybe even by Divine assistance – were enough. My grandfather lived in his adopted city of New York for 58 years, reached the age of 100, knew his grandchildren well, and lived to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren (though he outlived my grandmother and my mother).

In every generation, evil people put others at risk, simply because of who they are, labeling them as "less than" or even "enemies" to persuade others to accept and even support their evil, leading those at risk to seek refuge elsewhere.

So, in every generation, we must resolutely support those around us in dangerously unjust circumstances, for at-risk populations depend on the people around them for life itself. This was true in Egypt, in Persia, in Poland, and in Rwanda.

In every generation, we are required to view ourselves as if we ourselves left Egypt. This may be the easy part, for we have been rescued. It is even more important that we see ourselves as the people who must save those at risk.

Whether it is easy or not.
Whether it is comfortable or not.
Whether it is popular or not.
Whether our governmental or communal leaders agree, or not.
Whether it is "legal" or not.

Because *kol dmei ger-cha tzo-akim alecha.* The blood of "your stranger" is yelling out to you.
This is the story of our people, and the story of my family.

Ray Goldberg attended the JTS/Columbia Joint Program, and has decades of HR, benefits, and technology experience in large global firms, including Bankers Trust, Deutsche Bank, Marsh & McLennan, and Mastercard. He has seen first-hand that the most significant accomplishments arise from full collaboration amongst individuals and organizations with deep and wide-ranging expertise.

Connection Correction

Rabbi Suzanne Brody

We were strangers
In the land of Egypt;
Estranged
Not just from the people
With roots in that soil
But from our own community,
History, tradition.

Only when we were drowning
Gasping for air
Between the walls
Of water left and right
Did our personal barriers start to fall

Which is why
Hundreds of years later
When Rabbi Yochanan said
The split sea
Resembled a window lattice or net
The most important forgotten heroine,
Serah bat Asher, appeared to testify

"I was there
and the water was not as a net
Which still lets through
Droplets to divide us
but as transparent windows

Herding us together
So we would be
No longer strangers."

Rabbi Suzanne Brody is a passionate Jewish educator, writer, reader, and crochet enthusiast. She is the author of multiple books of poetry, a historical fiction mixture of poetry and prose, and a murder mystery. In addition to writing, Suzanne serves as the Director of Ithaca Beit Midrash (ithacabeitmidrash.com)

All Will Cross

Julie Brandon

we've been taught
the sea was crossed
long awaited freedom achieved
songs were sung
the women danced
people rejoiced as their pursuers drowned
A tough fact to accept
we celebrate, even today
I find it hard to feel the same joy today
watching the freedom of so many
snatched away
those who never expected it to be them
but those of us who've fought for freedom
over and over
not just our own but yours and yours and yours
we're not surprised
come, we'll show you how it's done
we can help each other across the sea
to freedom

Julie Brandon is a poet, playwright and lyricist. She lives in Downers Grove, IL and is a member of Beth Tikvah Congregation in Hoffman Estates, IL.

The Journey is Ongoing

Rabbi Linda Shriner-Cahn

When I was growing up, seders were a gathering of refugees, each with their own story to tell. Highlighted over and over again, we were reminded to remember the stranger because we too were once strangers…

Where did we come from?
Everywhere and nowhere
Yet there is specificity
Each starting point unique
Unlike any other

So, the journey begins
Alone and uncharted
Suddenly you look around
And see others
Each carrying their own load
Hurrying forward
Each parcel different from any other
Filled with memory
With flavors
With fragrances
With all that was left behind

And the journey continues
As we go together
Hoping, no, praying for a place that will take us
Where we can put down our burdens
Where we can share our stories

And our dreams
Knowing that wherever we stop
We will soon be on the move again
Gathering others alongside us
Sharing our stories and our burdens
Building a mixed multitude
Walking into the future together

Rabbi Linda Shriner-Cahn has served as the spiritual leader of Congregation Tehillah in Riverdale, New York, since 2008, providing long-standing leadership to the community. She is the immediate past president of the Association of Rabbis and Cantors, chairs the Interfaith Clergy Conference of Riverdale, Kingsbridge, and Spuyten Duyvil, and serves on the board of the Manhattan University Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Center. Rabbi Shriner-Cahn speaks and writes about Torah as a guide to living with resilience.

Crossings - A Fugue Poem

Eillene Leistner

He escaped Siberia across the Urals,
his nearly frozen nose
still intact, his once blond hair
turned jet coal black.
He crossed the Urals back to his home,
destroyed by war,
neighbors still killing his kin and more.
He crossed that broken world,
left it to be rebuilt, without his skills,
talents, brains or wit.

He crossed two countries,
found a DP camp with thousands of others
waiting to flee. Laws changed,
two years passed, he traded
vouchers for fresh food and silver
to buy his passage at sea.
He crossed the ocean
on a repurposed war ship, learned
new languages, escaped his past
with a strong English name.
Welcomed by new family,
he buried old memories, never to talk
about the pain or joy, though sometimes
he cried like a little boy.

Carpentry was his trade,
he built pearl tables that were inlaid
and cabinets galore,

eventually he had his own furniture store.
He fell in love with a local girl,
married and fathered three daughters
who knew his strange habit
of crossing a street to greet
a newcomer, stranger,
a world unto themselves, who had
crossed land, sea and time
to meet on new terrain.

They were his *landsman**
from the old country and unafraid,
he asked each one, *"Vos Macht a Yid?"***
How are you? *Have you found your reason to live*?
They laughed, sometimes hugged,
they who had left
full lives behind, each branded
with erased history,
never to see their lost loves and homes.

He drew them near,
refugees no more,
trembling on the sands
of their new life's shore.

At different times in her life, poetry was Eillene Leistner's primary creative expression; several of her poems were published on the *Of the Book* website and she was recognized by *Writer's Digest* in 2022 for her poem "Beacon Hill Beach." She attends poetry classes and leads poetry groups and readings at her synagogue, Congregation Beth Sholom in Teaneck, New Jersey.

**a fellow Jew from the same country or region in Eastern Europe*
***How are you?*

Crossings

Kaila Schwartz

They came from Shklov and Kruk
Birzai and Ottynia
B'chol dor vador
Villages and towns emptied of its Jews
Within the years of war
Chayav adam
Borders crossed over and around them
Hungary, Austria, Poland, or Russia
It didn't matter
Lirot et atzmo
Life was hard and often double taxed
Some traveled with their families
Other families sailed in shifts
Some traveled alone
K'ilu hu yatza mimitzrayim
We left Egypt, free to become a people
As a people, my family
left to escape persecution
refugees who have, for generations,
lived as migrants, even after
Roots stabilized in their depths
When will it be time to leave again?

Kaila Schwartz runs an award-winning high school theatre program in the SF Bay Area. When she is not teaching, directing, or writing, she can be seen researching her family history.

Home

Ruth Traubner Kessler

The transplanted tree has memories longer than its roots

Season-less phantom pains

Branches longing in one direction
no matter which way the wind blows

Leaves whispering in a tongue those around will never understand

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Reprinted in *The Country of Elsewheres*, Broadstone Books, 2025. © 2025 Ruth Kessler

Ruth Traubner Kessler is a two-time immigrant. Her publications include *The Country of Elsewheres*, the chapbook *Fire Ashes Wings*, and over 80 individual poems. Her work has been set to music and made into an artist book. She lives in New York City.
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Leaving Narrow Places: Thriving in Newfound Freedom

Dr. Robyn Faintich

> "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."
> —Deuteronomy 10:19

Each year at the Seder we retell the story of leaving Egypt. The *Haggadah* teaches:

> "In every generation a person must see themselves as if they personally left Egypt."

But the Hebrew name for Egypt—*Mitzrayim*—contains another layer of meaning. It shares a root with the word *meitzar*, meaning a narrow or constricted place.

Egypt was not only a physical location. It was also a place of confinement, fear, and limited possibility.

Many of us have experienced our own versions of narrow places, moments when life felt restricted or uncertain, when the future seemed unclear, when we felt trapped or alone.

The Exodus story reminds us that leaving a narrow place is only the beginning of the journey.

After the Israelites crossed the sea and began their journey through the wilderness, something surprising happened. Only weeks after receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the people became afraid. Moses had gone up the mountain and had not returned when expected. The future felt uncertain.

In their anxiety, a group of Israelites created the Golden Calf.

We often read this story as an act of idolatry. But it is also a story about fear. The people had left the narrow place of Egypt, yet the wide-open uncertainty of freedom frightened them. The calf represented something solid and familiar in a moment when everything else felt unknown.

Freedom, it turns out, can be unsettling.

That is why the Torah repeatedly reminds us that we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Our memory of narrow places is meant to shape how we see others. Having known what it feels like to live in a narrow place should widen our hearts toward those who find themselves vulnerable or displaced.

Throughout Jewish history, many have carried this memory with them as they crossed borders, languages, and cultures in search of safety and possibility.

At the same time, the story of the Golden Calf reminds us how easily fear can pull us back into narrow thinking. When uncertainty rises, it can be tempting to grasp for something predictable rather than embrace the responsibility that freedom brings.

The *Seder* invites us to reflect on both truths.

Around this table sit many voices, like the Four Children in the *Haggadah*. Some of us may feel confident about the future. Others may feel uncertain. Some may ask big questions, and some may not know where to begin.

All of those voices belong in the conversation.

The story of Passover does not end when the sea splits. The harder work begins afterward, in the wilderness, when a newly free people must decide how they will live with one another and with the strangers among them.

The journey out of Egypt began long ago, but the task of thriving after leaving narrow places and the obligation to help others do the same belong to every generation.

Questions for the Table

- When have you experienced a "narrow place" in your own life? How did that experience shape your understanding of freedom?

- The Israelites created the Golden Calf when the uncertainty of freedom felt overwhelming.

What fears sometimes appear when people leave narrow places behind?

• How might our own memories of narrow places help us support others as they work to thrive after leaving theirs?

• What memories have been passed down in your family about what it took for your ancestors to thrive in new places?

• Can you share a story about someone who helped you thrive after leaving a narrow place?

Dr. Robyn Faintich is the founder of JewishGPS and an educator who writes about modern Jewish life and Jewish identity through the lens of Jewish wisdom. She has spent almost three decades helping individuals and organizations build meaningful Jewish moments.

ברך
Barech

A Harachaman for Immigrants

Rabbi Joseph H. Prouser

הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יִטַּע בְּלִבֵּנוּ אַהֲבַת הַגֵּר,
הַמִּתְהַלֵּךְ מִמַּמְלָכָה אֶל עַם אַחֵר, לָדַעַת
נַפְשׁוֹ נִשְׁתַּדֵּל פִּי שְׁנַיִם, כִּי גֵּרִים הָיִינוּ
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.

May our merciful God implant within our hearts sincere love for the strangers and the immigrants among us, those who wander from one nation to another. May we redouble our efforts truly to know their souls, for we were strangers in the land of Egypt.

אַהֲבַת הַגֵּר -- *love for the strangers and the immigrants*
- See Deuteronomy 10:19, etc.

הַמִּתְהַלֵּךְ מִמַּמְלָכָה אֶל עַם אַחֵר -- *wander from one nation to another*
– See I Chronicles 16:20.

לָדַעַת נַפְשׁוֹ -- *that we may truly know their souls*
- See Exodus 23:9.

כִּי גֵרִים הָיִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם -- *for we were strangers in the land of Egypt*
- See Deuteronomy 10:19.

The Harachaman ("Our Merciful God") prayers inserted into Birkat Ha-Mazon remind us of how we might translate the Jewish value of mercy and compassion into meaningful action. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out that the oldest of these personalized petitions is the one in which guests invoke God's blessing on their hosts: "This is how Abraham and Sarah brought monotheism to the world. They would provide hospitality to strangers. When the meal was over, and the guests would begin to thank them, Abraham would reply, 'Thank the One from whom all we have enjoyed has come.'" Our love and compassion for strangers, foreigners, and immigrants is among the oldest, most fundamental, and indispensable elements of ethical monotheism, of Jewish morality, and of sincere service to "Our Merciful God." While particularly well-suited to the Pesach Seder, this "Harachaman" may be included whenever Birkat Ha-Mazon is recited.

Rabbi Joseph H. Prouser is editor of *Masorti: The New Journal of Conservative Judaism.*

נרצה
Nirtzah

Passover: Who Do We Remember?

Max Hollander

Passover is a holiday of memory. More than that, it's a case study in how memory can be used to cultivate identity and promote justice. We are commanded to "remember the Exodus all the days of your life," to maintain constant awareness of God's relationship with the Jewish people and to inspire us to care for the vulnerable — the strangers among us — because we know what it's like to be strangers in a strange land.[39]

However, while the story of our experience in Egypt is a driving force behind our caring for the vulnerable, I believe a more powerful expression of this message is found in its precursor. Exodus is a story about God remembering the plight of an oppressed immigrant population in a foreign land, but Joseph's is a story of being forgotten in a strange land, and it was that forgetting that led to the enslavement of the Israelites.

Joseph is one of the most unfortunate characters in Tanach. The favorite of his father but hated by his brothers, Joseph is stripped of his familiar surroundings and taken to Egypt, abandoned by his family. There, he suffers from oppression and

[39] Exodus 23:9

exploitation by people who had the power to help him but didn't. In Potiphar's house, Joseph painstakingly cares for his master's property, only to be imprisoned for a false accusation without a second thought. In prison, Joseph eases the pain of a cupbearer by interpreting his disturbing dream, informing him he would soon be freed. His only request is to be remembered and advocated for after the cupbearer's release:

> *I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews; nor have I done anything.*[40]

And yet, as soon as he's freed from prison, "the cupbearer didn't remember Joseph; he forgot him."[41] Or Ha-Hayyim explained that the verse's emphasis on the cupbearer's forgetfulness was highlighting that the forgetting was deliberate. To forget, Or Ha-Hayyim claimed, is to actively "blot something out" of one's mind. Alternatively, Rabbi Yaakov Mecklenburg claimed, "Most usages of forgetting mean not putting one's attention to something, since it isn't important in his eyes to put his mind to it." Joseph, a kidnapped slave imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit, didn't matter enough to the cupbearer to be remembered — despite Joseph's kindness. That remained the case until the cupbearer stood to benefit from Joseph when Pharaoh needed a dream interpreter.[42]

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[40] Genesis 40:15
[41] Genesis 40:23
[42] Genesis 42:12

Ultimately, Joseph's time in Egypt becomes a blessing; he is given a new name, family and position, and saves the kingdom from famine.[43] But his good fortune is short-lived. In the opening verses of Exodus, we are informed that "a new king arose over Egypt who didn't know Joseph."[44] The immigrant, kidnapped from his home and forced to live among strangers who used and abused him — only to become viceroy and save the kingdom — is forgotten by the kingdom he saved.

Joseph's experience in Egypt is so often the experience of the immigrant, mistreated and abandoned by strangers unless he (or his memory) serves their needs. It's an experience we must remember almost as much as we need to remember our redemption. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* suggests that the four cups of the *seder* are sourced in the four times the word *kos*/cup is used in the cupbearer's dream.[45] The very last thing the Israelites did in Egypt wasn't make Matzah. It was fulfill their promise to Joseph to remember him and bring up his bones from Egypt.[46]

Maggid, the section of the Passover seder where we retell our foundational story of the Exodus, doesn't start with an in-depth analysis of the story. It begins with *Ha Lachma Anya,* an invitation to the less fortunate — the strangers,

[43] Genesis 41:45
[44] Exodus 1:8
[45] Talmud Yerushalmi, Pesahim 10:1
[46] Shemot 13:19

immigrants, and poverty-stricken, those without seders or homes of their own — to join ours. It's a public declaration that we haven't forgotten them, and a promise to remember them when the *seder* ends and they leave our homes. It's an opportunity for *tikkun*, a reparation, for the forgetfulness that plagued Joseph and led to Egyptian enslavement. It's only when we remember the less fortunate among us that we can truly sing *Le-Shanah ha-ba'ah bi-Yerushalayim*, next year in Jerusalem, remembering that we too are immigrants, longing to return home.

Max Hollander is the Senior Manager of Jewish Education & Marketing at JFNA's BeWell, and he has studied at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Judaic Studies, and New York University. Max lives with his wife, two daughters, and dog in New York City.

Why Did Ruth Immigrate to Judah?

Dr. Ed Greenstein

Immigration is typically motivated by self-interest. The Hebrews, Jacob and his family, moved to "sojourn" (*gur*), to spend time as foreigners, in the land of Egypt. The Hebrews emigrated from Egypt to gain their freedom and reclaim their foothold in the land of Canaan. Three dozen times the Torah commands us to treat the "sojourner" (*ger*), the foreigner in our midst, with care and concern because we were "sojourners" (*gerim*) in the land of Egypt.

Seven weeks after Pesaḥ, on the festival of Shavu'ot ("Weeks") we read the book of Ruth, *Megillat Rut*. The plot of the deceptively simple narrative makes its first turnaround in an ironic change of direction in a family's migration. A Judean from Bethlehem, Elimelech, takes his family—his wife Naomi and their two sons—eastward, across the Jordan River, to the land of Moab. There was a famine in Bethlehem, literally "the House of Bread." But there was no mass migration of Judeans to Moab. It seems that only Elimelech and his family took that (selfish?) course of action. The sons had to marry Moabite women, so we may surmise that there were no

other Judeans there—and that this Judean family was accepted.

Elimelech dies and then his two sons die childless in Moab. Naomi, who heard that the famine back home had ended, decided to return home and let her two Moabite daughters-in-law remain in Moab and build families. She may have done this out of love, but she also had a personal interest: she might reconstitute a life in Bethlehem, but she did not need the burden of two Moabite women, who might not be well-received and whose maintenance she could not guarantee. She persuades one daughter-in-law to stay in Moab. But the other, Ruth, thwarts her mother-in-law's will and insists on going to Judah with Naomi. What could be her motive?

Because Ruth "clings" (*daveqa*) to Naomi, it has been understood that it was an act of love (*ḥesed*). Because Ruth proclaims, "Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God," it has been understood that Ruth became a devotee of the God of Israel. But what are her prospects in Bethlehem, how secure would her future be—as a foreigner and as the tag-along of a bitter and seemingly indigent woman? Whatever Ruth's motive, it does not appear to be self-interest.

If one follows the stages of the plot and pays close attention to the dialogue, one scenario gradually emerges. A wealthy kinsman of Naomi in Bethlehem, Boaz, takes an interest in Ruth, and responds favorably to Ruth's suggestion that he marry her. Boaz recognizes Ruth's motive,

saying: "Blessed by the LORD are you, my daughter! Your current *ḥesed* is even greater than your past one—because you have not gone after young men, be they poor or wealthy" (3:10). That is, a younger woman like you should have sought a younger man for a husband. But you want to marry me. This is the greater *ḥesed* of Ruth. Boaz discerns that Ruth has all along been pursuing a plan: get to Bethlehem, find a wealthy kinsman of her late husband, Maḥlon, and get him to marry her.

Why? The fog clears in chapter 4. Elimelech and Naomi owned a field in Bethlehem, which they had to leave in others' hands. The only way to perpetuate the name of a deceased Israelite would be "to establish his name on his estate" (להקים שם המת על נחלתו). Only a well-heeled relative of the deceased could purchase the field for the family (technically "redemption," *ge'ulla*). And if a relative would marry Ruth, in a quasi-levirate arrangement (wherein an heirless deceased's relative would marry his widow), the son of that marriage would inherit the family field—and then "the name of the deceased would be established on his estate." Boaz redeems the field, marries Ruth, and, with God's help, they have a son. That son is regarded as Maḥlon's heir, and the field will carry the name of Maḥlon.

Ruth faced many uncertainties in executing this plan—but the only way to accomplish it was to go against the odds and try. Only a handful of commentators got to the bottom of the mystery: Ruth migrated to Bethlehem out of love for her

dead husband—to keep his name alive in the only possible way. That is what we call "true *ḥesed*"—the kind that cannot be repaid. Ruth migrated out of selflessness.

Recommended reading:

- Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), esp. chap. 3.
- Ilana Pardes, *Ruth: A Migrant's Tale* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2022).

Dr. Ed Greenstein is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Bar-Ilan University. His annotated translation of the *Book of Job* (Yale University Press) has been widely acclaimed.

One Little Kid

Rabbi Menachem Creditor

One little kid,
one little kid,
our Founders,
dreamers
crossed wide waters
for that one little kid,
bringing their hopes
to build the better world
our Founders dreamed of
for one little kid.

Then came others
who forgot how to dream,
and guarded their power
against the dreamers
who also crossed wide waters
for their little kids,
for the better world
our Founders dreamed of
for one little kid.

Then came fences
raised by those
who forgot how to dream,
turning away the dreamers
who crossed wide waters
for their little kids,
for the better world

our Founders dreamed of
for one little kid.

Then came the wandering
along roads and rivers,
souls lost at the fences
raised by those
who forgot how to dream,
who turned away the dreamers
who crossed wide waters
for that one little kid,
for the better world
our Founders dreamed of
for one little kid.

Then the Angel of Death
came before the Holy Blessed One, saying:
"I have no need of these souls
lost along roads and rivers,
turned away by the fences
raised by those
who forgot how to dream,
who targeted and
turned away the dreamers
who crossed wide waters
for that one little kid,
for the better world
our Founders dreamed of
for one little kid."

And God wept, saying:
"*My children,*
you have vanquished Me,
you have vanquished Me.

Only your strength,
only your hope,
only your deeds
can end this chain."

And so, finally,
God's children rose
to answer the tears of heaven:
and **remembered** the souls
lost along roads and rivers,
to open the gates
built by those
who had forgotten how to dream,
and **welcomed** the dreamers
who crossed wide waters
for their little kids —
(*who, after all, are all of our kids*)
into the better world
our Founders dreamed of
for one little kid.

Rabbi Menachem Creditor serves as the Pearl and Ira Meyer Scholar-in-Residence at UJA-Federation New York and is the founder of Rabbis Against Gun Violence. He is an adjunct Senior Lecturer at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Rabbi Creditor lives in New York with his wife, singer and AJR Rabbinical Student Neshama Carlebach, and their family.

"In every generation, each person is obligated to see themselves as if they personally left Egypt." With these words, the Passover Seder transforms memory into moral vision. In Every Generation invites readers to encounter immigration not as a contemporary controversy, but as a sacred inheritance embedded in Torah, liturgy, and collective Jewish memory.

Co-edited by Dr. Ora Horn Prouser and Rabbi Menachem Creditor, this Haggadah supplement gathers essays, drashot, poems, prayers, liturgical readings, and black and white artwork that explore what it means for a people shaped by exile and wandering to remember, and to respond. Drawing deeply on Jewish texts and spiritual imagination, this most recent offering in the Academy for Jewish Religion (AJR) holiday supplement collection emphasizes immigration as a core Jewish value rooted in the commandment to love the stranger and the enduring declaration: "We were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Designed to accompany the Passover Seder, these offerings enrich the ritual experience with theological depth and ethical clarity. Rather than political argument, this volume offers sacred reflection, asking how ancestral memory forms Jewish identity, empathy, and responsibility in every generation.

At the Seder table, as we recount our journey from constriction to freedom, In Every Generation calls us to recognize the stranger's story within our own, and to let that recognition shape the Jewish future.

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