

HONORING THE HOSTAGES

PASSOVER 5784



Jews around the world are struggling together to simultaneously hold our celebrations of freedom when such freedom is so desperately lacking for our people at this moment. Our tradition reminds us that the Jewish experience is the experience of overcoming hardship, resilience, and rebuilding. We can find strength in our unity, and in the knowledge that at Seders around the world Jews everywhere are honoring our family in captivity. As we declare "next year In Jerusalem," we are mindful and hopeful that next year we will all be together, free, in Jerusalem.

With prayers for peace, wishing you a meaningful Passover.

-All of us at the Charleston Jewish Federation



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This night is different from all other nights, and this Passover is different from all other Passovers we have celebrated. As we gather around our Seder tables to remember the enslaved Israelites' journey to freedom and to celebrate the resilience of the Jewish people, our celebration is bittered by the ongoing captivity of our brothers and sisters being held by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

Almost 200 days ago, on the darkest day for the Jewish people since the Shoah, 1,200 Israelis were massacred and 253 were abducted, taken to Gaza, and faced unimaginable horrors. While, thankfully, dozens of the hostages have returned home, there are still 129 hostages remaining in Gaza.

Men, Women, and Children.

Teenagers and Senior Citizens. Mothers and Fathers. Babies.

An infant who celebrated his first birthday in captivity.

Abused, assaulted, and raped. Traumatized and terrorized.

No communication. No proof of life. No timeline for return.

As we mark Passover 5784, the suffering of our extended family being held in captivity is felt by Jews around the world. At the Seder, we are instructed to retell the story of the Exodus as if we had personally come out of Egypt. This year, we don't need to try hard to imagine bondage, suffering, and yearning for freedom. We are living in this pain, here and now.

Passover is an auspicious time--but how can we celebrate redemption and freedom while Jews are actively being held hostage by terrorists? The resilience of the Jewish spirit dictates that we do both to weave together today's reality with our deep tradition: honor our heritage and honor the hostages.



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How to Honor the Hostages at Your Seder

Bring the Voices of the Hostage Families to Your Table

Share the following poem first recited in December 2023 by Rachel Goldberg, the mother of hostage Hersch Goldberg-Polin, who was wounded on October 7th at the Nova Festival, before being kidnapped by Hamas terrorists.

*There is a lullaby that says your
mother will cry a thousand tears
before you grow to be a man.
I have cried a million tears in the last
67 days.*

We all have.

*And I know that way over there
there's another woman
who looks just like me
because we are all so very similar
and she has also been crying.
All those tears, a sea of tears
they all taste the same.*

*Can we take them
gather them up,
remove the salt
and pour them over our desert
of despair
and plant one tiny seed.
A seed wrapped in fear,
trauma, pain,
war and hope*

and see what grows?

*Could it be
that this woman
so very like me
that she and I could be sitting
together in 50 years
laughing without teeth
because we have drunk so much
sweet tea together
and now we are so very old
and our faces are creased
like worn-out brown paper bags.
And our sons
have their own grandchildren
and our sons have long lives
One of them without an arm
But who needs two arms anyway?
Is it all a dream?
A fantasy? A prophecy?
One tiny seed.*



Include a Date on Your Seder Plate

One practice being observed this holiday is adorning the Seder plate with an additional item, a date. [JewBelong](#) describes this way to honor hostages in their 2024 Passover guide: "Date palm trees are known for their resilience and ability to thrive in arid climates, and they stand for perseverance, abundance, and growth. The same can be said for our brothers and sisters in Israel. May the sweetness of the dates help us connect even more greatly to their sacrifices while reminding us of the resilience of Israel and the Jewish people throughout history."

Open the Door for the Hostages

When we arrive at the point in the Seder where we open the door for Elijah, discuss leaving our doors open for those who are unable to join us tonight. We are leaving the door open to show the world that we have not and will not forget the hostages. Also, we may pour an additional cup of wine for the hostages, displayed alongside Elijah's.

Acknowledge the "Fifth Child"

In addition to discussing the four types of children: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who is unable to ask, we also acknowledge the child who is not free to ask. We think of Kfir Bibas, who at 15 months old spent more than six months as a captive in Gaza and remains missing. We think of Kfir's family at this moment.

Advocate for Those Who Cannot Advocate for Themselves

Contributing to organizations working to support the hostages and their families; calling our representatives and demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the remaining hostages; hanging posters with pictures of the hostages; and donning a yellow ribbon, will continue to keep their plight top of mind. After your Seder, send a letter to your elected leaders demanding the release of the hostages by following the QR Code below.



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Additional Resources



[Academy for Jewish Religion](#)

- Seder Interrupted: A Post-October 7 Haggadah Supplement



[Central Conference of American Rabbis](#)

- Prayers, Poems, Songs, and Meditations in Response to October 7



[Everyone Counts](#)

- Bringing the Hostages to Your Seder: Seder Supplement



[Haggadot](#)

- Make your own Haggadah



[The iCenter](#)

- Why is this Night Different?



[Israel 201](#)

- In Every Generation: Passover Supplement



[Keshet](#)

- LGBT+ equality
- An updated version of Dayenu
- An updated orange for LGBT+ identities
- Including Rage in your seder
- Speaking the truth and asking questions



[Kveller](#)

- 7 Ways to Address October 7 at Your Family Seder



[My Jewish Learning](#)

- Supplement Seder Readings



[Shalom Hartman Institute](#)

- In Every Generation: A Haggadah Supplement for 5784

