

CCAR PASSOVER HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT

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

COMPILED BY RABBI ANNIE VILLARREAL-BELFORD, EDITOR, CCAR PRESS

PASSOVER is our celebration of redemption. We remember that in ancient Egypt, we were slaves; we celebrate our miraculous exodus and freedom. We raise each of the four cups of wine to acknowledge the joy we feel that we live as free people today.

This year, however, our joy is tempered with the knowledge that not all Jews are free. The war in Israel that began on October 7, a day on which over 240 Israelis were taken hostage and approximately 1,200 Israelis were killed, is an ever-present reminder that in every generation, Jews must do the work to ensure our safety and freedom, so that we can work for the safety and freedom of all.

This year, our hearts are grieving for the more than 600 Israeli soldiers who have been killed in action, for their families and friends, and for the entire country—to which we are intimately connected—that has been thrown into turmoil, terror, and sorrow. May their memories be a blessing.

During our seders, we will remove ten drops from our wine glasses for each of the ten plagues that caused such destruction on the Egyptians because of Pharaoh's hard-heartedness. So too, our hearts are heavy with the thought of the innocent Palestinians who have died or are suffering. The wine drops are a reminder that compassion is part of our seder experience, and our compassion this Passover is heightened.

Every single hostage who remains captive in Gaza is one too many. Echoing the words of Yehuda Amichai in his poem "[The Diameter of the Bomb](#)," the diameter of the impact of each hostage taken is so much larger than just the impact on an individual. Their families, their friends, their communities, the entire country, and the worldwide Jewish community have felt the shuddering impacts of October 7. As we gather around our Passover tables—both personal and communal—our hearts are with our fellow Jews who are desperate for freedom. We hope that the readings included in this supplement can be woven throughout your seder so that our awareness—and our prayers—hold each hostage in our thoughts until all are free.



A Blessing before Candle Lighting

RABBI DANIEL GROPPER
Community Synagogue of Rye, New York

After a loved one dies—especially if they were a young person—a rabbi will often suggest, “light a third candle every Friday night.”

Years later, many parents still do.

Tonight, we too light a third candle. To remember and not to forget. So that their memories will be for a blessing.

For fathers, grandfathers, husbands, sons, brothers, brothers-in-law; mothers, grandmothers, wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters; cousins, friends, names we are just learning, names we should always remember.

We light for them.

For children—infants, toddlers, teens—who have not yet tasted the fruits of life.

We light for them.

For soldiers, concert goers, *kibbutznikim*. For people waiting for a bus.

We light for them.

For people who just wanted to live their lives in peace, for those who worked and strove for peace.

We light for them.

For those taken hostage. Let us keep it lit until they are reunited with their loved ones. Reunited with life.

We light for them.

There are not enough candles. There is not enough grief, enough anger, enough worry, enough sadness. There are not enough candles. . . .

Let us be the light. Let us be like the sparks released at the dawn of creation. If there are not enough candles, let us then be the light.

A Prayer for the Redemption of the Captive Israelis

RABBI OFER SABATH BEIT-HALACHMI

Translation by Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi

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תְּפִלָּה לְפִדְיוֹן שְׁבוּיִם

אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִתִּיר הָאֲסוּרִים, מְשַׁבֵּב לְדָד,ִ

מְשַׁבֵּב לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה (תְּהִלִּים ט) שְׁלַח,

הַצֵּלָה שְׁלֵמָה וּפְדִיּוֹן גְּמוּר לְנִתּוּנֵים בְּשִׁבֵי אוֹיֵב.

חַזְקֵי רוּחַם, הַבִּיאֵי לָהֶם אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ לְשִׁמְרָם מֵרַע.

תְּנֵי בֵינָה בְּלֵב אוֹיֵב לְהַשִּׁיבָם בְּשִׁלְמוֹת גּוֹף וְנַפֶּשׁ.

תְּנֵי תְבוּנָה בְּלוֹחְמֵי צֹה"ל לְחִלְצָם בְּלֹא אֲבוּד נַפְשוֹת.

תֵּן לְכֹל בְּנֵי וּבָנוֹת אֲבֹרָהֶם, שָׂרָה וְהַגֵּר אֶת עַז הָרוּחַ וְאִמְךָ

הַלֵּב לְהַתִּיר כְּבִלֵי שִׁבֵי וְלַחֲיוֹת חַיֵי חֲרוּת.

יִקְרְאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ עִמּוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֲכַבְּדֶהוּ (תְּהִלִּים צא)

וְנֹאמֶר, אָמֵן.

Our God, the One who raised Joseph up from the pit, be “a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:10). Send complete rescue and full redemption to all those held captive by the enemy.

Strengthen their spirit and bring them our prayers that they be protected from all harm. Implant understanding in the heart of the enemy that they may return the captives in wholeness of body and spirit.

Grant wisdom to the Israel Defense Forces that they may secure freedom for the captives without loss of life. Grant strength of spirit and courage of heart to all the sons and daughters of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to release bonds of captivity and allow us all to live in freedom.

“They shall call upon Me, and I will answer them; I will be with them in distress; I will rescue them, and honor them” (after Psalm 91:15).

And we say: Amen.

Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Matanot Aniyim 8:10

RAMBAM

פְּדִיּוֹן שְׁבוּיִים קוֹדֵם לְפָרֶגֶט עֲנִיִּים וְלְכִסּוּתָן. וְאִין לָךְ מְצוּהָ גְדוּלָה כְּפְדִיּוֹן שְׁבוּיִים שֶׁהַשְּׁבוּי הָרִי הוּא בְּכָלֵל הָרַעֲבִים וְהַצְּמֵאִים וְעָרוּמִים וְעוֹמֵד בְּסִכְנַת נְפֻשׁוֹת. וְהַמְעֲלִים עֵינָיו מִפְּדִיּוֹנוֹ הָרִי זֶה עוֹבֵר עַל (דְּבָרִים טו טז) "לֹא תֵאֱמָן אֶת לִבְךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֵּן אֶת יָדְךָ" וְעַל (וִיקְרָא יט טז) "לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל דָּם רֵעֶךָ" וְעַל (וִיקְרָא כה גג) "לֹא יִרְדְּנוּ בְּפִרְךָ לְעֵינֶיךָ." וּבִטֵּל מְצוּת (דְּבָרִים טו ח, דְּבָרִים טו יא) "פֶּתַח תִּפְתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ לֹ: וּמְצוּת (וִיקְרָא כה לו) "וְיָחִי אָחִיךָ עִמָּךְ." (וִיקְרָא יט יח) "וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ." (מִשְׁלֵי כד יא) "וְהִצַּל לְקַחִים לַמּוֹת" וְהִרְבֵּה דְּבָרִים כְּאֵלֶּה. וְאִין לָךְ מְצוּהָ רַבָּה כְּפְדִיּוֹן שְׁבוּיִים:

The redemption of captives (*pidyon sh'vuyim*) takes priority over supporting and clothing the poor. There is no mitzvah greater than the redemption of captives, for the captive is numbered among the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and those whose lives are in danger. One who ignores the responsibility of redeeming the captive transgresses the following negative commandments: "do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kin" (Deuteronomy 15:7), "do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:16), and "one shall not rule ruthlessly over one's kin in your sight" (Leviticus 25:53). One nullifies the mitzvah "you must open your hand to him" (Deuteronomy 15:8), the mitzvah "your kinsperson shall live with you" (Leviticus 25:36), "you shall love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), "(if you refrain from) saving those taken off for death" (Proverbs 24:11), and many similar verses. No mitzvah is as great as *pidyon sh'vuyim*.

This text and translation is from "On the Ransom of Hostages," The Freehof Institute of Progressive Halakhah, October 10, 2023 (https://www.freehofinstitute.org/uploads/1/2/0/6/120631295/ransom_of_hostages.pdf).

Prayer for the Captive Women and Children

RABBI LIZ P. G. HIRSCH

Executive Director, Women of Reform Judaism

Our God, the God of our ancestors
Free all those captured in war.
Free the captive women:
Free our mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts.
Free the babies and children,
senselessly, violently kidnapped.

Fulfill that great mitzvah, that holy duty
Of redeeming the captive.
May they all return, swiftly
To their families and their homes.

May women's bodies be sacred and safe.
Shechinah, nurturing presence, watch over them.
Guard them.
Protect them.
Bring them home.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, מַתִּיר אֲסוּרוֹת.
Baruch atah, Adonai, matir asurot.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, who frees the captive.

I Have No Words

RABBI BARRY L. SCHWARTZ
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Words fail and we stand in shaken silence.
Words fail and we stand in despairing tears.
And then, because we are human, and because we love life, we try to summon words.
Maybe it is the somber verse of the Haggadah that rings truest:

Ela sheb'chol dor vador om'dim aleinu l'chaloteinu.

“But in every generation they rise against us to destroy us.”

In our great grandparents' generation they rose up to slaughter us in the pogroms.

But the people of Israel live.

In our grandparents' generation they rose up to slaughter us in the Holocaust.

But the people of Israel live.

In our parents' generation they rose up to slaughter us in the War of Independence and the Yom Kippur War.

But the people of Israel live.

In our generation they rise up to slaughter us on the borders.

But the people of Israel live.

We live as we count the dead, and mourn the dead.

We live as we tend to the wounded, and pray for the wounded.

We live as we fight on for the captives, and redeem the captives.

We live as we cry out for justice.

We live as we pray for the soldiers.

We live as we comfort the afflicted.

With a broken heart and a clenched fist all I can manage to choke out:

The people of Israel live!

A Prayer for Israel

RABBI ERICA ASCH

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President, Central Conference of American Rabbis

אָבִיבּוֹ שְׁבַשְׁמִים
שְׂכִינָה מְקוֹר הַיִּיבּוֹ
צוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ

Sovereign of All the World—

Shield Israel beneath Your protective presence.

May all the inhabitants of Israel know physical safety.

May they find the comfort of community as they grieve together.

May they experience a renewed love for their country and its people.

Guide Israel's leaders as they balance the necessity of safety and security with the suffering of the innocent.

May they act wisely, with determination and deliberation.

Implant within Israel's citizens compassion, strength, and resolve.

May they be nourished by our love and support.

Our prayers are linked with the prayers of countless others as we remember Your ancient promise from the book of Second Samuel,

“I will establish a home for my people Israel and will plant them firm so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more . . . I will give you safety from your enemies.”¹

At this time of danger and grief, may we have the audacity to pray for peace, just as our ancestors have done each time they were threatened and terrorized.

נְתַתְּ שְׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ

We pray that the people of Israel find wholeness and know tranquilly.

We pray for shalom in the land we love.

¹ II Samuel 7:10–11

Rescue Me

MUSIC BY BETH SCHAFER • LYRICS BY RABBI KARYN KEDAR
Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim, Deerfield, IL

Inspired by the second blessing of the Amidah and Psalm 142:6

Someich noflim

Lift me and carry me

Matir asurim

Release me, redeem me

Zaakti eilecha Adonai hatzileini meirodfai

I cry from the depths, rescue me

(2x)

Give strength, give power to those who reach for me

Reach for me! Reach for me!

I call from my darkness, give me courage, grant me strength

I reach for you, I reach for you

Zaakti eilecha Adonai hatzileini meirodfai

I cry from the depths, rescue me

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MWm8OVmdkg>

Sheet music: <https://bethschafer.com/product/947652>

Nothing Left but Tears

MUSIC BY SUE RADNER HOROWITZ • LYRICS BY ALDEN SOLOVY

Written in Jerusalem on October 16, 2023

I must be made of water.
I have nothing left but tears.

Daughters. Mothers.
My spirit aching.
Sisters. Brothers.
A heart that's breaking.
I must be made of water.
I have nothing left but tears.

Blood and terror.
Children dying.
Fear and anger.
So much crying.
I must be made of water.
I have nothing left but tears.

Oh this heartbreak,
Silence howling.
Oh this heart ache,
Terror prowling.
I must be made of water.
I have nothing left but tears.

Not just water.
These tears, they feed me.
My bones are iron.
My people need me.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VV6ZwSsKxGg>

Sheet music: <https://tobendlight.com/2023/10/nothing-left-but-tears/>

My Children Are Drowning: Compassion and Loss at the Passover Seder

RABBI HARA E. PERSON

Chief Executive, Central Conference of American Rabbis

Our Sages taught:

*At the very hour that the Egyptians were drowning,
the angels wanted to sing before the Holy Blessed One.*

God said to them:

*“My children are drowning in the sea—
yet you would sing in My presence!*

*As the heirs of slaves redeemed from Egypt’s violence,
we rejoice at the sight of oppression overcome.*

Yet our triumph is diminished by the slaughter of the foe.

*Therefore, we take ten drops from the wine within our cups:
one for each plague God brought upon Egypt.*

—MISHKAN HASEDER: A PASSOVER HAGGADAH

The angels watch as the Egyptian soldiers plunge into the sea behind the Israelites. But unlike the Israelites, for whom the waters parted, the waters close in on the Egyptians and they begin to drown. “Come let us sing,” shout the angels, “a song of praise! A song of redemption, a hymn of triumph!” Their hearts full of thanksgiving, they yearn to sing of victory, a song of release from pain and oppression.

The Talmud teaches:

The angels wanted to sing their songs but the Holy One said, the work of my hands, the Egyptians, are drowning at sea and you wish to sing? Therefore we conclude that God does not rejoice over the death of the wicked (BT *M’gillah* 10b). God interrupts the angels, reminding them that the Egyptians too are God’s children. Asking the angels to feel empathy for their enemies goes against their every impulse. If the angels had difficulty not taking pleasure in the suffering of their enemy, how much harder this is for us humans. To complicate matters, Rabbi Elazar argues that while God does not rejoice in the deaths of the wicked, God does cause us to rejoice. God recognizes that we are not divine. As humans, when we are hurt, there is a natural impulse to desire retribution. And yet God’s example to take no pleasure in the suffering of others presents us with a challenge: to hold ourselves to a higher standard.

To be human, created in God's image, is to struggle, against all evidence to the contrary, to recognize the humanity of all God's creatures. If God can see the humanity in all people, how can we not also aspire to do so? If God is pained at the deaths of all God's children, we too must push ourselves to feel the pain of others, some of whom are our enemies, but some of whom are innocents: children, women, the elderly.

At our seder tables, we rejoice as a people in our ongoing survival, generation after generation, despite those who would seek to destroy us. We focus on the “us-ness” of our story, that which makes us unique as the Jewish people. At the same time, we are invited to be God’s partner in responding to the pain of people who are not us, but are still God’s children.

The Haggadah exhorts us to rejoice at oppression overcome, while inviting us to lessen the joy of our full cups of wine in commemoration of the suffering of our foes. And if we are to care about those who are our foes, how much more must we care about those who are not even our foes, but are simply not us. That is our challenge as free people—to care for the fates of others. It may be difficult work, but if this is God’s struggle, shouldn’t it also be ours?