



PESACH CONVERSATION STARTERS

Questions & Conversation Starters to Enhance Pesach (Passover) 2026/5786

As we approach Pesach 2026 / 5786, we find ourselves once again sitting at the Seder table with hearts that are full, complicated and deeply connected to the world around us. This year, the themes of the Haggadah—freedom, resilience, faith and responsibility—feel especially immediate and personal.

The goal of this effort is to actively help you enhance your Seder and Pesach experience and assist you in creating meaningful and memorable conversations with your family, friends, students and congregants.

These 600+ questions have been developed over the last decade by us, colleagues and other agencies. This year, new sections and questions have been added and, as always, past questions have not been edited or modified in any way. We encourage you to select questions from this list to actively engage those assembled, facilitate discussion and enhance your celebration.

This year's Seder must be different. At the time of this writing, Israel is at war, actively working to dismantle the regime in Iran through Operation Lion's Roar in coordination with the United States' Operation Epic Fury. We are mindful of the immense sacrifices being made each day. Our thoughts and prayers are with the brave American soldiers and the chayalim of the IDF who are defending Medinat Yisrael and Am Yisrael, the Jewish people, with extraordinary courage and strength. We must keep them in mind during the Seder and throughout Pesach and proactively do what we can to stand as proud and passionate Jews, including being active on social media, calling out antisemitism, attending rallies and engaging with government officials.

Pesach reminds us that the journey from slavery to freedom is never simple or complete. It is a process filled with uncertainty, fear, faith and growth. This year more than ever, we are reminded that freedom is not only something we celebrate, but something we must protect, strengthen and deepen.

At Areyvut, we have developed these questions to help you meaningfully engage those around your table—not only during the Seder, but throughout Pesach. These Conversation Starters are designed to spark thoughtful dialogue, encourage reflection and create opportunities for connection across generations. They can be used at the Seder, during meals throughout the holiday or at any point during the year.

You can place a question on each place card and have participants raise them during the meal, select specific questions for each course or discussion or share this document in advance and invite guests to come prepared with questions they would like to explore. While the Seder is the highlight for many, we encourage you to use these questions throughout the holiday and beyond. These questions are designed for ongoing use and reflection.

We recognize that each person comes to the table with their own experiences, perspectives and emotions. Please create an environment that is open, respectful and sensitive, where participants feel comfortable sharing and equally comfortable passing. The goal is not to have all the answers, but to ask meaningful questions and listen deeply.

The themes and ideas reflected in these questions are not limited to Pesach. They are meant to inspire ongoing reflection, conversation and action well beyond the holiday itself. In this way, the Seder becomes not just a moment, but a catalyst for living with greater purpose, awareness and responsibility.

If you find these resources meaningful, we encourage you to support Areyvut's commUNITY building efforts so we can continue to educate, engage, motivate and inspire.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for additional questions at info@areyvut.org.

Wishing you a Chag Kasher V'Sameach, continued health, abundant blessings and success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Rothner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel Rothner, Founder & Director

Avadim Hayinu

Can you identify something that, if you looked at it, or envisioned it, you would feel that reality more deeply?

Do you like long stories? Why do you think the Haggadah tells us that the longer we make this story, the better?

What aspects, tools, strategies and methods of this historical struggle for freedom can still shape our personal and political realities today?

What impact has Jewish education had on Jewish history?

What new narratives can we reimagine to help move us from despair to repair?

Why do you think education has become so important in Judaism?

Why does the Haggadah have to point out that old and wise people still have to do this mitzvah?

Why does the Haggadah say, “We were slaves in Egypt”? Were you a slave in Egypt? What is the message and point of this phraseology?

When you look out into the world, what do you see that speaks of the presence of divinity?

Barech & Hallel: Blessing and Praise

Could it be that the challenges of our current reality have obscured the many blessings that are flowing in your life?

How might you lift your eyes to the One Above and express your praise?

What are you most grateful for right now?

Bedikat Chametz

Are there bits of “chametz” that you might want to purge from your heart that are obstacles to getting in touch with the emotional load other people are bearing?

How can you relate the search for chametz to your own feelings of moral sensitivity?

Beginnings

Why are beginnings so important?

What meaning can we derive from the fact that on Pesach, “the first of the festivals,” the Seder is performed in accordance with the laws observed during the time of the Beit HaMikdash (the Temple)?

Blessing God

If you wanted to bless God, what events would you like to see happen that would facilitate you doing just that?

Chad Gadya

How do you think the message of the song is connected to the Seder night?

How does this song connect to our lives today?

Living at the turn of the 21st century, do you feel this song and the message behind it is still relevant to Jewish history?

What is the main focus at the end of the Haggadah and how is it different from the beginning of the Haggadah?

Why do we end the Seder with a song for children?

Children

Many of the “strange” practices at the Seder are explained by the commentators to be “so that the children will ask.” Why is it so important that children be involved at the Seder?

Why do we work so hard to encourage the children to stay up late and ask questions?

Climate Change & the Plagues

Do we see warnings in our environment- fires, droughts, floods- that feel like modern plagues?
If the Ten Plagues were rewritten today, what would they be?

What responsibility do we have to prevent suffering, just as we remember that Egypt suffered during the Exodus?

CommUNITY

How is your sense of belonging in a commUNITY tied to experiencing challenges together?

What are the areas in your commUNITY and on the larger world stage where bitterness, subjugation and slavery still exist?

I don't often see myself represented in my commUNITY and seldom hear my stories, how can I stay engaged in a commUNITY that doesn't reflect my identity?

What couldn't we accomplish on our own?

Think for a moment about the future of the Jewish commUNITY. Do you think your great-grandchildren will be sitting at a Passover seder someday? Why or why not?

What places of brokenness in the world or in the commUNITY do you most wish to help fix?

COVID-19

As COVID-19 continues, how do you stay resilient and grounded in the face of uncertainty?

As we celebrate our third Pesach of the pandemic, what are you grateful for?

As we prepare to leave the Egypt of mass-illness, what insights, feelings and awareness do we choose to carry with us into our coming liberation?

Even while in lockdown, in what ways were you still free?

Given what you experienced during the pandemic, are there other symbols you would add to the seder plate? What might they be? Why?

Has the pandemic made you feel like you've been living in a smaller space?

How can we remain aware of those around us who were already struggling and now must navigate this time too?

How could we take the initiative to bring the value of Hachnasat Orchim into our homes and communities?

How will re-cast our lives as emerge from "this season" of fear and uncertainty?

How have the physical restrictions and material simplicity demanded now allowed you to concentrate on what is most important in your life?

What does resistance look like when we are self-isolating?

How are you different as a result of living through our plague, COVID-19?

How will you try to change as a result of this plague?

Is COVID-19 a plague?

This Pesach many of us will still not have as many guests joining for the seder as in the past. What are ways we can feel connected to family and friends over the holiday?

What are things to which you have returned with genuine joy and appreciation?

What excites and inspires you most about the freedom and wellness that experience?

What hesitations, fears or suspicions might we find it hard to shake off as we leave the pandemic behind and how could they shape our thoughts and behavior?

Which areas in your spiritual life has COVID highlighted that require change? What questions might you ask to start the process?

Dayenu

Dayenu means “enough.” What does it mean to have enough?

Dayenu means “it would have been enough.” What are you grateful for and describe your personal dayenu.

How can we resist despair and lift up the brave voices that fight for human rights and justice, for freedom, dignity and love for all?

Seder night is when we experience the Exodus and Shabbat is when we experience freedom and utopia. Why do you think we need regular reminders of what freedom and utopia feel like?

Should we offer a Dayenu that the Iron Dome saved many lives?

Should we offer a Dayenu that some hostages were returned?

What do you see as the message behind listing the 15 stages in Dayenu?

What is Dayenu or enough for you?

What will get us to cry out “Enough Already” and rise up to resist oppression, cruelty and injustice, whether it is harming us or others in our orbit?

When do you say Dayenu in your life?

When is it enough?

Who are our modern Moses, Miriam, midwives and leaders of liberation?

Would it really have been “enough” if God had stopped at any of those stages?

Why is Shabbat specifically mentioned in Dayenu?

Diaspora

Are some Diaspora Jews more free than others?

Are you more free living as a non-practicing Jew in Israel or as practicing Jew outside of Israel?

How would your holiday celebration be different in Israel?

Now that Israel’s borders are open have you been or planned a trip? If not, what do you need to begin planning a visit?

Why are we considered to still be in exile when we enjoy religious freedom to such a great extent?

Do You

Do you believe we can eventually eradicate wars, poverty, and starvation? Or do you believe we will always be stuck in some version of these issues? How can we spread a more hopeful message and deal with the cynicism and self-doubt that sometimes accompanies conversations about changing the world?

Do you care about causes that have a direct impact on the people you love more than other causes?

If so, what about your concern for people who are not in your immediate circle of care? Who will work on behalf of them?

Do you have a story of being invited into someone’s home for a meal at a time of vulnerability in your life?

Do you feel loved?

Do you feel supported?

Do you feel valued?

Do you see yourself as having personally gone out of Egypt?

Egypt

How do the paths you have taken in life help you understand the journey out of Egypt?

Imagine that you’re rushing out of Egypt and you only have time to grab one thing. What would you take?

Moses took action because the Israelites in Egypt were being denied their basic rights. Which modern human rights issue compels you to act?

The Hebrew word for Egypt is Mitzrayim, which translates as “tight or narrow place,” from the Hebrew word tzar. What does it feel like to be in a narrow place?

What does it mean to experience coming out of Egypt with a group of people?

What does it mean to “regard” one’s self as having “personally left Egypt?”

What makes it so hard to leave our own personal Egypt?

Eliyahu Hanavi

Eliyahu Hanavi come in at the seder. Why him? What’s he doing here? Who would you invite if you were given the option?

Tradition says that Elijah the Prophet is supposed to announce the coming of the Messiah. If you could send Elijah to any spot on the globe to make the announcement of the Messiah, where would you send him? Why?

Eved Hashem (Servant of God)

Thankfully, we are not familiar with what it means to be a slave. How can we use Pesach as an opportunity to learn about what it means to be an Eved Hashem?

Exodus

How does the Exodus inform the kinds of actions and decisions you take?

How might a journey through time, rather than across distance, be part of the Exodus itself?

If you were making a video about the Exodus, which rooms in your home would you use to film the video and why?

In what ways have you made a personal connection to the Exodus?

Think of a time when you went into the unknown. What can the Exodus teach us about how to handle such a situation?

Was the story of Exodus a triumph for God or for the Israelites?

What about the Exodus makes you curious?

How did what your parents or grandparents pass down to you about the Exodus affect you when you were a child?

What are some ways you might use the telling of the Exodus story to continue your family’s traditions?

Why is it important to tell the next generation our personal or family “Egypt” stories?

Why is it important to make the Exodus a personal experience?

What did your parents or grandparents pass down to you about the Exodus?

What relevance do you find in the story of the Exodus?

What impact as an adult did your parents or grandparents teachings about the Exodus have on you?

What does the phrase and concept of “from Generation to Generation” mean to you?

What questions would you want to ask the Jewish people who experienced the Exodus?

Where do you think the story of the Exodus actually ends?

Family

Do you feel more connected to your parents and grandparents when you sit at the Seder table? If so, why?

What are ways you can feel connected to family and friends over the holiday?

What creative gifts of other family members do you see as an expression of their possible callings?

What stories do you know about your family’s struggles and successes?

What if the other proverbial bitter herb at the table is your brother-in-law or a family friend? How should such an individual be treated at the seder?

What was the best thing about how your parents raised you?

What's the best thing you learned from your Mother?

What was your favorite toy as a kid?

Food

Have you ever picked fruit or vegetables on a farm and eaten it straight from the earth? If so, what was that experience like and what feelings did it evoke for you? If not, find the opportunity.

How do the foods we eat on Passover help immerse you in the feeling of escaping Egypt?

How do the traditional Passover foods remind you of your family's journey?

How does your family use Seder foods and symbols to "relive the story"?

If you had to pick one food to eat every day, what food would it be?

If you were to add a new food to the Seder plate that symbolizes the yearning for freedom, what would it be and why?

Think about your memories of food and family. What might they teach you about yourself and your values?

What is your favorite thing to eat at the Seder?

Food for Thought

Are there events in our lives that it is important to remember daily?

Are we proud to be the Almighty's Chosen People? Do we live up to that designation as we should?

Ask yourself, as I enter a holy place and holy time, what do I want to be cleaned of, that I might be worthy of taking my place in a holy tent?

What mitzvah is most important to you?

What mitzvot do we do without making a bracha? Does this make them different from mitzvot that we do make a bracha on?

Can overthinking lead to paralysis rather than growth?

Have you ever allowed the perceptions of others change the way you think about yourself?

Have you ever met one of your heroes?

What does honor mean to you? How important is it to you? What exemplifies honor?

What does it mean to "speak to someone in their own language"? What is the value in it?

How can the way we treat and act with others change the way they think about themselves?

How can we act to bring about a better world?

How might you lift your eyes above and express your praise?

How much effort should we exert into trying to understand each other?

What living person would you want to host in your home? What questions would you ask them?

If you could have tea with a fictional character who would it be?

If you had \$5,000 how would you spend it? How does your answer change if it was \$50,000?

What's your idea of a perfect vacation and how can we make it happen?

Imagine that are told to leave home in 24 hours and can only take a small suitcase. What would you include and why?

Is humility on Your Moral Bucket List?

Is there a value in doing something because of its inherent value, not just because it's a mitzvah?

Is love a factor for you when you think about what kind of social cause you want to pour your energy into?

Name something about yourself that you appreciate, something that is your light that you can shine on others. Now think about the person sitting next to you, what is their light?
Think about a time when you felt fully loved. What did that sense of love and confidence motivate you to do?
Think about a time when you stood up for an ideal or helped someone else. What ripple effect did it cause?
What do we need to purify ourselves from?
What do you have to give?
What are challenges you have overcome in your life? Who supported you? Who have you supported?
What have you learned from your bitter experiences?
What are the different types of tears you have in life?
What are the different reasons you get teary?
What are we hiding from ourselves?
What are we purifying ourselves for?
What are you filling your vessel with this year? What if anything is missing?
What are you grateful for right now?
What are you striving towards?
What experiences in your life have given you hope? Tell about some struggle to change something that worked. What did you learn from it?
What is a piece of really good advice that someone has given you?
What would be possible if we allowed ourselves to find the truth?
What keeps you up at night?
Was there a time when feeling loved helped you endure a bitter time?
Where do you turn to find strength during difficult times?
What reminds you of the importance of justice in your life?
When have you acted as an upstander?
When have you sat by and done nothing as a bystander?
When do you say dayenu in your life?
What role have you taken to actively help repair the world?
What songs would you put on the sound track of your life?
What places in yourself do you wish to find new wholeness for?
What things can you celebrate in your life?
What would be our ideal life in 5, 10 and 20 years?
Why do you think education has become so important in Judaism and what impact has that had on Jewish history?
Why do you think Jews argue so much with each other? Is this a strength or weakness?

Four Sons

Do you think that each of us has a little of all of the sons inside? Why?
Do you think there is a 5th son? What should our relationship be with that son? Are we failing him?
Do you see any of the four sons in your own story?
How is each of the Four Children present within each one of us?
In your own words, summarize what each of the four sons asks and what the answer is for each.
Is it helpful categorizing kids?

What advice would you give to a teacher or parent who has many different types of children to teach?
What do you see as the message of including four different children in the Haggadah?
What son would you like to be?
When it comes to getting involved in social causes, which of the Four Children do you most identify with?
Which of the four children do you connect with most? Do you see all four in yourself?
Why are children especially important at the Seder?
Why by the Four Sons do we tend to classify individuals as being in only one of these categories?
Why do you think that children are the central focus at this central part of the Seder?
Why do you think this paragraph about the Four Sons is brought in the Haggadah? What is its purpose?
Which of the four sons are you most like (and you can answer more than one)?
Which of the four sons do you think God feels closest to?
Which of the four sons were you most like as a kid?

Freedom

Are Jews most free as a nation, a religious commUNITY or something else entirely?
Are there any parts of your life in which you feel you do not have freedom?
As Jews, are we more or less free than other people?
Can we choose to be free?
Can you be on a delayed plane and be free?
Can you be stuck in traffic and think you are free?
Can you share a personal experience where you felt a sense of freedom? What circumstances led to that feeling?
Discuss the activities we are free to do that many other people around the world are not free to do.
Does having more choices mean you are more free?
Has there ever been a situation when you wished you did not have so much freedom?
How can one object symbolize both slavery and freedom?
How can you speak out against ‘modern day Pharaohs’ who undermine freedom and democracy in our world?
How has our nation’s freedom changed over time?
How has the current reality brought you greater freedom?
If you think freedom is mostly about being free from specific threats or dangers, consider the cost of that freedom. What might be at risk, or even lost, as that kind of freedom is secured?
On Passover we recall our journey from slavery to freedom. How are you pursuing freedom for others?
What app on your phone is the most enslaving and which is the most freeing?
What are we free from?
What can you do to help people who are not free?
What can you share in your life to show you are truly free?
What do you like most about freedom?
What is the definition of “freedom” and how can we apply it to make our lives more meaningful?
Why do you seek freedom from?
What does freedom mean to you?
What does freedom mean to you personally? How do you define it in your own life?
When you hear the word freedom, what words come to mind?

What are some things that make you feel happy and free?
What's the value of acknowledging pain and sadness during a celebration of freedom and hope?
What is the definition of "freedom," and how can we apply it to make our lives more meaningful?
What freedoms do Jews have when gathered?
What freedoms do Jews have when scattered?
Why is it important to acknowledge the sadness during a day and time of freedom?
Why did we need Moses to lead us to freedom? Why couldn't we accomplish it on our own?
Why was it necessary for an outsider like Moses to lead us to freedom?
What is Jewish about freedom?
Who today lacks the freedom you enjoy?
Why do we seek liberation for all?
Would you like to live in a world without rules, in complete freedom, or do you need laws?

Gratitude

Can offering gratitude shape our approach to moving through challenging times?
How do you connect the obligation to experience leaving Egypt personally with the duty to express gratitude?
How do you express gratitude?
How do you sufficiently express your gratitude?
How does gratitude help promote humility?
How have you expressed gratitude this year?
Is it important to you to cultivate an attitude of gratitude?
What has compelled you to say "thank you" during this time?
When you think about making a positive difference in someone's life, how might gratitude refresh and energize you?
What is something that is "very good" in your life?

Gratitude & Perspective

What feels like a Dayenu this year? What have we taken for granted until recently?
What blessings feel amplified in uncertain times?
What does abundance look like beyond material comfort?
Who protected or supported you this year?
What strength did you discover in yourself?
What are we celebrating tonight that previous generations could not?
How do we cultivate gratitude without ignoring pain?
What freedom do we experience daily that deserves recognition?
What does enough look like for you?

Guests

Aside from food what else are people looking for when they come to your home?
If you could invite anyone, living or not, to join your seder, who would you choose and why?
If you could invite anyone to your seder who would you invite and why?
Is welcoming the stranger a form of Hachnasat Orchim?
How can we make our guests feel welcome?
Reflect on a time when you were the recipient of Hachnasat Orchim. What did you learn from the experience?
What are some of the needs that guests might have and how can we provide for them?
What are ways that we can fulfill this mitzvah over Pesach?

What are ways that we can fulfill this mitzvah throughout the year Pesach?
Why do we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us?
Why is Hachnasat Orchim such an important mitzvah?

Ha Lachma Anya

Does matzah represent freedom or slavery to you?
How does the Seder night connect you to other Jews?
Why it is important to share your Seder table with others from outside your close family?

Haggadah

Do you like long stories? Why do you think the Haggadah tells us that the longer we make the story, the better?
Haggadah means “telling”. What happens when you tell a story?
How do the different verbs of “telling” and “answer saying” help you understand the Haggadah?
The Haggadah concludes with a hopeful aspiration for the coming year. What’s your hope for your life and for our collective future this year?
The Haggadah prompts us to ask Four Questions. What questions do you have about the Seder table?
The Haggadah takes us through many parts of the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt. Can you tell us what you know about the Exodus?
Why isn’t Moses or Moshe mentioned in the Haggadah?
Which of those experiences of leaving Egypt described in the Haggadah- “...from sorrow to joy, from grief to celebration; from darkness to great light,” etc. have you had in your life? How might these personal experiences help you appreciate and commemorate the Exodus?
What new Haggadah (pr Pesach related book) did you get this year? How has it added to your understanding and celebration?
What questions might you add to the traditional questions of the Haggadah at this Pesach season?
Why does the Haggadah have to point out that old and wise people still have to do this mitzvah?
Why is God referred to as “HaMakom” or “the place”?

Hallel

As you say Hallel at the Seder do you picture old melodies and family members no longer living being present with you?
Do you connect more to words or song as a medium for expressing emotions?
Do you feel emotional reciting Hallel at the Seder?
Is it better to use our words or to words of someone else (in this case King David’s Tehillim) to praise and thank God?
Throughout the year we normally don’t talk during Hallel. Why are we able to at the Seder?
What do we have to praise and thank God for on Pesach?
When else in the year might we say Hallel at night?

Hope/Tikvah

Can you recall a time when you felt hopeless, but eventually found hope again? What helped you regain hope?
Do you know the words of Israel’s national anthem- Hatikva? Which words or sentences are particularly meaningful to you?
How can we spread hope to others who may be feeling sad or discouraged?
How do you think hope helps us when we face challenges or difficult times?

Imagine you have a magic wand that can make any wish come true. What is one thing you would wish for that would bring hope to the world?

What do you hope to learn on a deeper level this Seder night?

Hostages

Ask the children at your Seder table: What do you know about the hostages? What do you want to know about the hostages?

Can you imagine spending more than 500 days in captivity? What would be most excited to eat once you were redeemed?

How do you imagine hostages from October 7th and their family and friends reflect on what it means to be free?

How might we integrate hope for the return of our hostages into our Seders this year?

How might we meaningfully engage an intergenerational group with the hostage issue at the Seder table?

What gives you hope for the release of the hostages?

What is one thing you have done or will do to help redeem the hostages?

How Are We Different This Year?

Do our differences define us at this challenging time of growing gaps and polarization that divide us over political and ideological lines?

Does this story feel relevant to you this year? How?

How are we different tonight from the way we were just a year ago? What has changed?

What still unites us as we identify common ground and shared commitment to collective liberation?

Hunger

How can we open our homes to those who are hungry and in need?

How do we gather enough provisions while making sure everyone can access what they need?

How do we share our surplus with those who are increasingly vulnerable?

If you ruled the world, how would you solve world hunger?

Is there ever a time that we should not be inviting the poor and instead focusing on our own and our family needs?

The Seder begins by inviting “all who are hungry” to come and eat. Is feeding the poor the only way to end hunger?

What does it mean for you to fulfill the statement, “let all who are hungry, come and eat”?

Why is wine, an expensive, even extravagant item, chosen as the food that must be provided to the poor?

Why should the commUNITY provide the means for the poor to have their own seder instead of simply finding a place for them?

Inviting Others

Why do we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us?

Israel

Do you have family, friends and/or colleagues in Israel? Have you reached out to wish them Pesach greetings? If not be sure to reach out to them over the holiday.

How have the recent terrorist attacks in Israel changed your view on what being free means?

How will your seder be different this year considering the recent terror attacks in Israel?
If you were to choose six symbols, ideas or values which best represent what Israel means to you, what would they be and why?
Should Jews celebrating Pesach in Israel still say L'Shana Haba B'Yerushalyim or "next year in Jerusalem" at the end of their seder?
What does Jerusalem have to do with the Exodus story and Seder night?
What responsibility do you think we have towards the people and land of Israel?
When you sing L'Shana Haba B'Yerushalyim or "next year in Jerusalem" what do you think about?

Israel at War

As you read the verses of Hallel, including the verses about the redeemed captives, are there ways in which these ancient verses resonate differently this year or feel hollow?
Are you willing to break your heart anew so you can continue to feel the reality of what is happening in our world in the year and since that horrible day?
How can we celebrate a holiday of freedom when over 130 people are still held captive in Gaza?
How can we feast while we know there are hostages and regular people, who are not Hamas allies, starving?
How can we feel free again in the Land of Israel?
How can you support Israel at this time?
How do we call for all who are hungry to come eat at our tables when so many Israelis are not at their own seder tables and millions of Palestinians are on the brink of famine?
How do we express rage at the violation and destruction of human bodies, the cruel holding of hostages who have yet to be brought out from darkness to light, and the crushing of the dream that in a sovereign and armed Jewish state such things were safely in the past?
How do we identify with the hostages, the young men and women who are defending Israel and the October 7th survivors? Should we send letters? Gifts through various organizations? Should we wear dog tag necklaces demanding that the hostages be returned?
How do we sing this year?
How do we think about our ancestors who were slaves in Egypt without thinking of the hostages currently being held in Gaza? It feels almost impossible to call ourselves free when friends and loved ones are being held in unimaginable conditions for more than six months. How can we discuss freedom while our brothers and sisters are held in Gaza?
How does this Passover feel different from other Passovers?
How have the events of October 7th affected your feelings and connection to the State of Israel and/or the Jewish people living there?
October 7th was the worst day since the Holocaust. How should we navigate and carry the responsibility to carry the narratives forward? What do you think Never Again means in practice? Share a moment when you have felt particularly connected to the Jewish people. What gave you that sense of connection to the Jewish people?
Is it fair to compare the leadership of Hamas to Pharaoh?
Is it too soon to sing Dayenu?
Reading the traditional text of the Haggadah and thinking about the murderous rage wrought upon Israel on October 7th, does Hamas's messengers of evil unleashed fierce anger, wrath, and fury on innocent Israeli civilians, on soldiers cowering in their beds, on lovers of music taking cover in bomb shelters or hiding in fields, on families in their safe rooms. How many plagues should we include and count?
Should our Seder feast be intentionally different?

We count. We count the days until Shavuot, when we are gifted the Torah. Do we count the days since October 7th?

We've seen many heroic stories emerging since October 7th. Is there a particular one that stands out to you that you'd like to share?

What can you do to encourage others – including non-Jews- to support Israel at this time?

What events should you consider plagues this year?

What should we be doing differently tonight?

What symbols could you add to your seder table to represent the hostages?

What would it take to break open your heart to make you more open and flexible?

Jewish Identity

Have you seen Jewish identity grow stronger in tough times- personally or recently?

Jewish People

How do you feel when you hear stories about the struggles and triumphs of the Jewish people throughout history till today?

Kadesh

In this complicated world that often seems dark and profane, how can you strive towards greater kedusha (holiness) in your life in the year ahead?

What practical steps can you take to bring more holiness into your own life, that will sanctify our people and our world with greater freedom?

Karpas

Is the smell of the fresh parsley the scent of hope and rebirth?

How does dipping connect to the Exodus?

We dip karpas (greens) in salt water to symbolize the tears of the ancient Israelites. What modern suffering evokes your sympathy?

What is something that we should be crying about that we aren't?

What makes up your personal "karpas"?

When are tears purifying and what do we want our tears to purify us from- and for what purpose?

When you cry about something are you more sensitive to it throughout the day?

Why would we dip the symbols of growth and renewal in salt water, which symbolizes tears?

Korech

Is it appropriate to taste the sweetness of the charoset, while there is so much bitterness in the world?

Lechem Oni: The Bread of Affliction

As we contemplate the lechem oni, our matzah, for what do we feel the need to cry out?

How can we also cry out to awaken ourselves from any slumber we might be feeling so we can do the hard work of redeeming our world?

L'Shanah Habah: Looking Beyond our Current Reality

How will this year's observance awaken and renew your quest for spiritual freedom?

What house of bondage is holding you today?

Ma Nishtana

Are there bad questions?

Could “What makes this night different?” be a separate question that deserves its own answer?

Do all questions have answers?

How does Ma Nishtana and the role of children asking questions effect your experience of the Seder?

How does having the youngest person at the Seder ask the Ma Nishtana make the whole process feel new?

How is asking questions “an expression of faith”? Doesn’t it show a lack of faith?

If the questions of the Ma Nishtana are proscribed and the answers are known, how do the questions stay relevant?

If you could add a fifth question about what bothers you most or bringing up a central theme which Haggadah neglected to mention here, what would it be?

If you could add a fifth question to the Ma Nishtana (why is this night different) what would it be?

If you had the ability to question anyone in the world today, who would that be and what would you ask them?

Is there actually a fifth question in the Ma Nishtana?

It is traditional for the youngest person at a seder to ask the Four Questions. If you were to create a new tradition for the asking of the Four Questions, who would you choose to ask the questions and why?

Think of 4 questions about the world you live in today. Why is this night different? What would you change, if you could?

What do we do if no one we know has the answer to a question?

What questions do you need to ask this year?

What questions might you ask in addition to The Four (the Ma Nishtana)?

Why do you think we encourage children to ask questions on Seder night?

Why is it significant that the Four Questions are almost exactly as they were asked in the time of the Second Temple?

Maggid

In what ways could the themes we find in the story of the Exodus from Egypt be relevant to your life today?

Maror

How can putting a small taste of bitterness mirror the experience of slavery?

How can this symbol help us identify with the brutality and bitterness today?

How do you handle your “Maror moments”?

What can you do to actively ensure others have less “Maror moments” throughout the year?

What do you think the message of the Maror is?

What is Maror for you may not be to others. How can you internalize that message?

Why is it important to push through and eat Maror even when you really don’t like it? How does that idea apply throughout the year?

Materialism

How can I acknowledge my privilege in a way that works towards elevating the voices of marginalized people in my commUNITY?

How can we identify both material and non-material abundance?

How do we recognize and share our own privilege in moments like these?

If you are fortunate to be successful, do you have any responsibility to share your success with others? Why or why not?

What can I do to actively share my time, treasure and talent with the world?

Matzah

Breaking the matzah represents the brokenness in our world and our commitment to repair it.

What's one repair you'll make this year?

If matzah symbolizes slavery, what does breaking mean?

In what way are you broken this year?

What does the matzah represent to you? What new awareness might you bring to it this year that links this ancient symbol to modern poverty?

What is the relationship between the "bread of affliction" and the two commandments that follow?

Why is Motzi Matzah intentionally two separate steps? How do mark steps in our time?

Mitzrayim

If it is true that God sent us down to Mitzrayim as a punishment to Avraham, why should we be thanking God for taking us out?

Why did we need to be in exile in Mitzrayim to begin with?

Modern-Day Pharaohs & Freedom

How do we balance gratitude for freedom with an awareness of those still in bondage, whether physical, economic or emotional?

What are the personal "Pharaohs" in our lives that keep us stuck in habits, fears or systems of oppression?

Who or what are the "Pharaohs" of today- forces that oppress or limit human dignity?

Never Again

What can you do to make sure "never again" actually means "never again"?

What do you think "never again" means in practice?

Next Generation

What stories do you see as your responsibility to pass down to the next generation?

Why are these stories important?

Next Year

How would you like next year's Pesach to look different from this year's Pesach?

The seder concludes looking toward the future as we recite, "Next year in Jerusalem." What's your aspiration for your life or for the world this year?

What actions will you take in the year ahead to actively pursue justice for people around the world?

What do you want to accomplish in the next year?

What is your hope for the Pesach to come?

Where do you want to be next year?

Personal Transformation

Is it possible to truly leave the past behind? How do we bring our “Egypt” with us into the present?

Pesach is a story of radical change. What’s one thing you’d like to transform this year in your own?

The Israelites struggled with faith in the desert. How do you deal with uncertainty in your own journey?

What are the “wilderness” moments in your life—the spaces between where you were and where you want to be?

Pesach and Social Justice

Are there modern-day Pharaohs - leaders, systems or mindsets -that keep people oppressed?

How does Pesach challenge us to think about refugees and displaced people?

The Exodus story is about not just escaping oppression but also building something new. What does “building a just world” look like today?

The Torah repeatedly tells us to care for the stranger because we were once strangers in Egypt. What does this demand of us today?

Pesach Preparation

How do you help your family get ready for Pesach?

Which parts of your home feel busier before Pesach?

How does it feel when your home is ready for Pesach?

Is it really so hard to refrain from chametz for the full holiday of Passover?

Plagues

Do you think the plagues were from natural causes or supernatural intervention? Do you think they are any less impressive if God performed them through nature?

How are modern plagues similar or different to the plagues that we recall at the seder?

How can we help to get rid of the plagues in the world?

How did the Children of Israel feel about the Egyptians' pain and suffering throughout the plagues?

Reciting the '10 Plagues' is one of the most dramatic moments in the seder. What are some of the plagues that threaten the planet today?

Some people say the Ten Plagues are part of tradition and so they should be included in the seder.

Others say the plagues lead us to inappropriately exalt in the adversities suffered by the Egyptians.

Others say that Jews take a drop of wine from the cup for each plague, acknowledging that freedom was won at a cost. Do you believe in a God who punishes people? Were our ancestors awed and fearful? Were they vengeful over their neighbors' calamities?

Would God slay the Egyptians' firstborn sons? What do you think? Should the Ten Plagues be part of the seder?

What are the plagues we face today?

What is a plague in our world, and how do you think it could be solved?

What is a modern-day plague that you come in contact with every day?

What is today's plague teaching you?

What modern-day plagues can you visualize to give more power to their reality for you?

When you think of the Exodus story, which elements gain power for you by visualizing them?

Which do you think was the worst of the Ten Plagues?

Which plagues affected the Egyptian's ability to sit?

Which plagues affected the Egyptian's ability to sleep?

Which plagues affected the Egyptian's food and/or the ability to eat?
Which plagues affected the most senses?
Which plagues caused some sort of death to the Egyptian's?
Which plagues imprisoned the Egyptian's in their houses?
Who were the plagues really for?
Why do you think God chose these particular plagues?

Plagues and Power

How do we balance celebrating liberation while acknowledging the suffering of the Egyptians?
The plagues were warnings before the Exodus. What warnings do we see today about the state of the world?
What are today's global plagues -environmental, social or political - and how do we respond to them?
When is it ethical to disrupt the status quo for the sake of justice? Was Moses' approach the only way?

Pour Out God's Wrath

An out and out call for God to destroy our enemies seemed out of place in modernity. Feeling safe and secure, many of us have tried to soften this seemingly gratuitous call for anger by adding a prayer for the righteous gentiles, which was written 400 years before the Holocaust, or to using this moment to remember the victims of the Holocaust. Over the years, Jews tried to find ways to explain this ancient text as a lens into the period of time in which it was written and to distance ourselves from it because it makes us uncomfortable. Is this still the case?
How do we channel our anger, to speak out and stand up against rampant antisemitism? How do we publicly pour out our anger carefully against those who earned it, not shy away from seeking their destruction and our continued existence? As Elijah's cup sits poured, ready and waiting to welcome an era when it will indeed be impossible, much less a failure, to imagine this, should we add another symbol to beckon Elijah? What should it be?
Is this the year we should consider adding our own words to ask God to mete out justice and carefully Pour Out God's Wrath on those who have been heinous to the Jewish people? Should we add our personal rage to Pour Out God's Wrath on those who have held our people hostage and committed barbaric crimes of sexual violence? And while we ask God, what should we consider as we open our front door for Elijah, for redemption, and for hope for a better future?
Jews are instructed to open our doors and Pour Out God's Wrath, publicly, into the street. How do we recognize this exclusive privilege is for those who have the freedom to open our doors in safety without fearing harm from outside? How dramatically different this seemingly normal experience of opening our doors? How do we identify with our people hid in safe rooms in the South of Israel, gripping the door handles and barring them shut with their bodies while Hamas rampaged inside their homes?

Privilege & Responsibility

If Pesach is about moving from slavery to freedom, how do we acknowledge the responsibilities that come with privilege?
If you had to create a new ritual at the Seder to acknowledge privilege and justice, what would it look like?
What does it mean to experience abundance while remembering those who still struggle?

Questioning and Doubt

How does Passover challenge us to reexamine beliefs we take for granted?
If we were writing a new Haggadah today, what urgent questions would we include?
Is doubt a necessary part of faith?
The Seder encourages asking questions, but what happens when we don't get clear answers?

Questions

Are there bad questions?
Do all questions have answers?
Do we listen to questions we hear repeated many times?
Do you get more invested in learning when you are encouraged to ask questions?
Does asking questions reinforce our sensory experiences?
Does asking questions that were asked thousands of years ago change how you think about those words?
Has a question ever changed your life?
Have you ever asked a question that you couldn't answer?
How is asking questions an expression of faith? Doesn't it show a lack of faith?
How might asking questions about the Exodus change the way you internalize the meanings of the story?
How might your answers to the next generation's questions affect the way they see the world?
In what ways does questioning help you to better understand the story of the Exodus?
What do we do if no one we know has the answer to a question?
What happens when we hear a question repeated many times?
What helps you prepare to ask deep and honest questions?
Why can questions be so powerful?
Why do you think we encourage children to ask questions on Seder night?
Why might it be powerful, helpful and important to discuss the same questions each year?

Remembering

Are there experiences, people or things that you remember daily? How do they make you feel?
How does one balance between remembering and getting stuck in the past?
What is the goal of remembering?
What is the role of memory in the building of Jewish culture and society?
Why are so many of our holidays based on stories of survival?

Seder

Before 2020, you might have hosted or been a guest at a seder with many people. Do you remember who was at the seder/sedarim?
Choose an object on the Seder table. If it could tell us a story about itself, what story would it tell us?
Did you ever "taste" love and bitterness together on "one bite" like the Korech sandwich?
Do you think our schools and other educational institutions can learn anything from the way we learn and teach on Seder night?
How has your sense of seder or order been this year?
If the president, your favorite actress, or a famous athlete (or any other celebrity you like) came to your seder, which symbol or ritual would you want to show them first?
If you can celebrate the Seder with anyone who would be sitting around your table?
In what ways could making your Seder more engaging for children also enrich it for people of all ages?

In what ways does your Seder engage various senses and which are the senses you are using?
We retell the Passover story in each generation. What do you want the next generation to remember about how you responded to today's challenges?
What are ways you can take the Seder experience and incorporate its messages into the rest of the year?
What is different about washing your hands to prepare yourself to "do something" as opposed to washing away something?
What is the Seder encouraging us all to do?
What is your favorite part of the Seder?
What makes this seder different?
Why is it important to finish the meal with "being found"?
What one item would you bring to this year's Seder that represents the past year?
What one item would you bring to this year's Seder that represents your hopes and dreams for this year?
What happens at your seder that connects you to previous generations of your family?
What is special about the educational methods used at the Seder table?
Why do so many Jews even those who aren't affiliated celebrate a seder?
What should we add to our ancient ritual to make it personal and contemporary? How should we shape the memory of this time?
Why do you think the Seder specifically is meant to be done in the vernacular, while many other mitzvot and prayers are done in Hebrew?
Where do you most find the symbol of hope in the Seder?
What is something memorable that you remember from last year's seder?
What is something fun that you remember from past seders?
Which symbol on the seder plate do you think is the most important?
Which symbol on the seder plate represents you? Why?
Why do you think that children are the central focus of such an important event as Seder night?
Why do you think we end the Seder with a song for children?

Simplicity

What does simplicity give you?
When have you chosen something simple and been glad you did?

Singing

Is there a lot of singing at your Seder?
What can singing achieve that words without music cannot?

Sitting Down

Beyond offering our thanks to God, who else is deserving of our hakarat hatov (gratitude) as we celebrate?
What and who must we notice as we set and sit down at our Seder tables this year?

Slavery

Are there experiences in your life or your family's that help you relate to the feelings and challenges of slavery or fleeing?
Can exploring our history of slavery make us more free today?
How do those sitting at the seder table and enjoying the fruits of freedom identify with this story?

How do you feel when others say “you are treating me like a slave” or the like when others still face slavery today?
What are you a “slave” to?
What can slavery mean for the modern-day Jew who has never been enslaved?
What does hard work mean? Why do we work hard? How is working hard different than slavery?
What does it mean for you to say, “now we are all slaves”?
What is slavery?
What is the difference between freedom and slavery?
What power does it have to begin the night from tears of slavery?
What connections can you make between slavery/incarceration in the story of Passover and modern-day conditions for people in jails and detention centers?
When all this is over, what form of “slavery” that has had you in its grip will you not return to?
Why does the Haggadah say, “We were slaves in Egypt”? were you a slave in Egypt?
Why did God let us become slaves in the first place?

Social Media

Are you really free if you need to keep checking social media?
Can you think of something you did in the last year to actively help someone else that only took place because of social media?
Does social media impact you positively? How so?
How do you determine whom to follow and what to share?
How, if at all, might social media affect the way we tell stories?
What stories do you choose to share (or reshare) on social media?

Spring

Are you more open to new experiences in the spring?
How are we feeling as we greet this new season, Spring, which our tradition views as a harbinger of new birth and rebirth?
How do you honor the natural world, the changing seasons and the emerging spring?
What nourishes us in this season? What has nourished us to this point?
Why should the fact that Pesach takes place in spring make a difference?

Storytelling

Can you think of a story from the Haggadah or Torah that has a special meaning for you? What does it resonate with you?
How does telling a story or hearing a story shape how memories are made?
How is storytelling an act of remembering?
What role does the retelling of the story have?
What is the connection between telling a story and asking questions about that story?
In your life, how does the telling of a story help you preserve memories and make new ones?
What are you passing on to the next generation in your telling/saying?
When you share your personal journey, do you tell that story in different ways to different people?
Why or why not?

Strangers

Based on world events, do you feel differently about strangers than you did at this time last year?
How might relating to the Passover story help us relate to the struggles of the refugees?
How might the Passover story teach us to treat strangers today?

The Passover story reminds us that we, too, were once refugees. How can we draw upon our history to help people fleeing their homes today?
What are some organizations in your area that provide food and shelter to those in need?
What can you do today to help those living under persecution or in need of redemption?
What is the root of anti-Semitism and why have we always had enemies that seek our destruction?
What redemption do you hope for in our generation?
What would you put in your backpack if you had to leave your home forever?
Who do you regard as “the stranger” today?
Who is living under persecution or in need of redemption now?
Would you be willing to move to another country for the rest of your life if you knew that you would be very successful in the new country?

Survival

How would you describe Jewish survival?
What can you do to help ensure Jewish survival?
What is the difference between surviving and thriving?
What stories about survival, escape, discrimination or oppression do you feel it I your

The Digital Exodus

Can social media and digital tools be used to liberate or do they sometimes enslave us in distraction and misinformation?
How has technology changed the way we tell and pass down stories? Is this a new kind of “oral tradition”?
If Moshe had access to modern technology, how would the Exodus story have played out differently?

The Meaning of Freedom

How do our personal “enslavements” (addictions, expectations or fears) compare to the physical enslavement of our ancestors?
Is freedom an external state or an internal one? Can you be free even in a restrictive situation?
What modern-day forms of enslavement - literal or metaphorical - should we be fighting against?
What responsibilities come with freedom? Are we truly free if others around us are still in chains?

The Next Generation

How do we build resilient Jewish children?
How do we ensure Jewish identity feels strong and proud?
How do we make ancient traditions relevant for young people today?
How do we teach complexity without overwhelming them?
If a child asked you, “What does Pesach mean to you?” how would you answer in a single sentence?
What do we most want children to remember about this year?
What does Jewish courage look like for teenagers?
What Jewish value matters most in unstable times?
What questions do you hope children ask this year?
What responsibility does this generation carry forward?
What stories must be told clearly and honestly?
What values do you hope to pass on to the next generation through the Pesach story?
What will Jewish history say about this moment?

The Passover Message

If there is one lesson to take from our Passover experience, what would it be?

If you could be any character in the Pesach story who would you want to be and why?

If you could design a T-shirt summing up Pesach, what would it say?

What do Passover and Easter have in common? (Think spring festivals, eggs, and redemption, to start.) How do they differ?

What is your favorite part of the Passover holiday?

What message do you hear God saying to you right now?

When you celebrate Pesach, in what ways can you connect to both the past and the present?

Where is the balance between the sense of play and the seriousness of the Passover message?

Why is it so important to personally connect to the story and holiday of Passover?

The Power of Stories

How can stories of oppression and resilience from other cultures deepen our understanding of Pesach?

Is there a part of the Pesach story that you struggle to connect with? How might you reinterpret it in a meaningful way?

The Haggadah tells us, "In every generation, one must see themselves as if they personally left Egypt." What stories -personal or historical -help you relate to this?

What's a personal "Exodus" you've experienced - something you had to escape from or transform?

The Role of Women in the Exodus

If the story were told from the perspective of the women, how might it sound different?

The midwives Shifra and Puah, Miriam, Yocheved and Pharaoh's daughter all played crucial roles in the Exodus. Why do you think their contributions are sometimes overlooked?

What "modern-day Miriams" do you see -women who courageously lead their communities toward justice?

The Symbolism of Food

If bitter herbs remind us of suffering, what foods might remind us of hope?

If you were to create a new symbolic food for the Seder plate, what would it be and why?

Matzah is both the "bread of affliction" and the bread of freedom. How can something represent two opposite things at once?

What does it mean to "taste" history? How does food shape memory and identity?

This Year

How are you filling others vessels this year?

How might the current challenging reality allow you to recognize the many blessings in your life?

How might you embrace the vulnerability of your present reality?

How will you use the lessons of this past year to fight for a more just world?

The Haggadah concludes with a hopeful aspiration for the coming year. What's your aspiration for your life or for the world this year?

This year, do you feel more like an enslaved or a free person?

What bitterness are you revising this year?

What did you learn about yourself?

What did you learn from the bitter experiences this year?

What did you shed tears over this year?

What makes this seder joyful for you?
What makes this seder or Passover different?
What new aspect of the story or the Haggadah have you discovered this year?
Who would you want to invite to your seder this year? How can you invite their qualities to join you at the seder? What are stories of theirs that you want to remember?
What memories will be drawn from this year's handwashing when we look back at it?
What was a holy, awe inspiring event moment for you this year?
What is an example in the past year that you can point to as a source of inspiration regarding people who you know are working towards alleviating current day bitterness?
What new connections did you make this year?
What is something new you have learned about your home this past year?
What new observations and experiences have changed you?
What is different about you this year as compared to last year?
What's one way you embodied slavery?
Why is this Passover different from all over Passovers?
Will it be easier or harder for you to relate to the themes of Pesach during this year's Seder, compared to other years?

Time

How much control do we really have over our time today?

Today

How do you think the Passover story connects to your life today?
We retell the Passover story in each generation. What do you want the next generation to remember about how you responded to today's challenges?
Who are the enemies of our generation that seek to destroy us, and can we identify miracles God does to protect us?
In what way do the themes of Passover resonate with the current socio-political climate?
What lessons have you derived from the Torah you have studied these past few weeks and from the experience of this current reality?
What lessons are you learning from today's reality?

Tonight

What do you take with you from tonight into your tomorrow?
What part of your journey are you still walking?
Why is tonight different?

Tradition

What is your favorite story or tradition? Why do you like it?
What stories or traditions do you hope to pass down to your children or grandchildren?

Tzafun

Does this step carry special meaning this year?

Ukraine

Are you willing to help settle refugees from Ukraine in your commUNITY?

Do you think leaving an empty seat for those fleeing Ukraine will help you emphasize with them and connect to the Passover story?

How has the situation in Ukraine impacted your Seder and Pesach experience?

If you can speak to those fleeing Ukraine what would you say to them?

What can you do to help those fleeing Ukraine?

What have you done to date to help the refugees from Ukraine?

What readings relating to Ukraine are you going to bring to your table?

Women of the Exodus

How can we better highlight women's contributions in history, activism and modern struggles for justice?

How would the Exodus have been different if women had been the central narrators?

The Pesach story is full of unsung heroines -Shifra, Puah, Miriam, Batya and Yocheved. What lessons do their stories offer for today?

Yom Kippur

Why do Yom Kippur and Seder night both end with a focus on Jerusalem?

Your Vision

Identify something you will do personally to contribute, for the sake of our families, friends and all beings on the planet?

Share your vision of the world you want to live in. What steps will you take to get us there?