

RE: Mishael Zion's revised Israeli Haggadah for Passover 2024 (post Black Shabbat of October 7th)

The project:

Twenty years ago, my son Mishael Zion self-published his own Hebrew haggadah named, rather audaciously, "*The Israeli Haggadah: Halaila Hazeh* (hardback, 164 pages, 2004). Therefore, he feels an obligation to update it to keep apace with the growth and change in Israeli identity which has been tried and tested of late. Even before the war, he began to prepare shorter, more user-friendly and inexpensive version (paperback, 96 pages) with new feminist voices and with patriotic values of justice and inclusion central to the year-long protests to defend Israel as a Jewish democratic state. Now, since Oct. 7 Mishael has added texts and artwork that will help families integrate symbolically and emotionally the trauma of the massacres of last Simhat Torah, the Black Shabbat, with the joy of the Jewish family holiday par excellence, Passover. More broadly, Israeli society and many American Jews are experiencing as an existential truth a renewed understanding of the Haggadah's "*in every generation they rise up to destroy us,*" the Jewish people" because Hamas is part of the aggressive encirclement of Iran's coalition and because the explosion of a broad Western worldwide antisemitism that morally defends Hamas' massacre and hostage taking as the legitimate representative of Palestinian nationalism and delegitimizes the existence of Israel. Further this Haggadah must make a contribution to renewed hope, *Next Year in Jerusalem*. It must be joyous, colorful, inclusive – not depressing. It must honor the extraordinary military heroism of the citizen army, civic volunteerism and Jewish national and international solidarity, and celebrate the values of freedom and democratic equality internally within Jewish society.

The two-fold plan:

Many of you have seen the *A Night to Remember: Haggadah of Contemporary Voices* (2007) which is based on the original *Halaila Hazeh* the Hebrew haggadah. By the end of January its revised edition will be redesigned and it will be sent to the presses. After Purim in late March and early April Mishael will be invited by many television, radio and newspaper outlets to talk about his revised Israeli Haggadah and explain its relevance to the fragile state of the Israeli psyche. The Zion family and several private donors are covering all the costs.

But for the second part of the plan we need your help.

What is our request for support?

We want to be able to **distribute 5,000 copies at no cost** to the most hard-hit portions of Israeli society to boost their morale on this Passover home holiday which will be enormously painful for them. Specifically, I am referring to communities of the destroyed kibbutzim (whose own haggadot were of course burned up in the scorched earth massacre); to the families of some 400 dancers from all over the country who were murdered at the Nova dance festival (who are just now beginning to participate in support groups); to some of the tens of thousands of frontline evacuees living in hotels; to the families of the fallen and injured soldiers; and to some of the amazing volunteers who created civic organizations to fill in (where the dysfunctional national government has done far too little). We believe these people

will find comfort and encouragement in using a Haggadah that reflects directly on the experiences they felt and the values to which they devoted themselves.

Contributions: If you desire to make a contribution, you may use the Hartman website <https://hartman.tfaforms.net/f/support-shalom-hartman>

Then please send an email to Noam Zion noam.zion@gmail.com and Ariel Kaliche Ariel.Kaliche@shi.org.il so the funds will be set aside for the ZION-HARTMAN Haggadah 2024. Our plan is to purchase haggadot at the cost of printing and then distribute them across the country to the target audiences we described above.

100 haggadot should cost about \$700 and 1000 about \$7,000. Any contribution will be welcome and perhaps you can gather a few friends or a congregation to make a larger gift.

English PDF Haggadah Supplement for 2004:

For donors and their congregations, we are busy producing an English language PDF Seder Supplement for 2024 PDF sharing the most relevant selections – texts and art - relating to Oct. 7th from the revised Hebrew Haggadah. We hope these resources will be particularly useful for your seder this year, so that Jews in Israel and In North America will be sharing the same texts on the same night. (This PDF will be provided at no cost).

Todah, may we all have *besorot tovot*, good news!

Noam Zion, faculty of the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, Emeritus

Questions: noam.zion@gmail.com

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND on the revised 2024 Israeli Haggadah

Urgency: Obviously now the greatest material needs are for the evacuees and the soldiers, but by April the trauma of a whole society and the deep grief will become more and more acute. This Pesach in April, 2024, only six months after the turning point tragedy of October 7, Jews in Israel will gather as extended families into the prime intergenerational Jewish meal, the seder. They will not be taking family togetherness or the physical security of their homes for granted. As they try to celebrate their lives as survivors together with thousands of their wounded or grieving relatives, they will have to take stock of those absent from their seats at the table this year who were there last year. Absent are not only the more than 1600 murdered by Hamas's army in their houses or killed in the war against Hamas, but also tens of thousands who will still be in the army on Pesach guarding Israel and patrolling in Gaza. Holiday-leaves on Passover will not be very generous in 2024 after Yom Kippur 1973 and Simchat Torah 2023 have become perennial reminders of surprise attacks on Jewish holidays by those committed to genocide of the Jewish state.

In this complex situation on this coming Passover, so much in our traumatized Israel will still *not* have been resolved, politically or emotionally, regarding the reconstruction of Gaza and the moral reckoning with the Netanyahu government. The ongoing encirclement by a nearly nuclear empire building Iran and its puppets makes the existence of the state precarious. So Israelis will want to reflect culturally and religiously on who they have become as Israelis and, alongside Jews around the worldwide, how to read differently, and more deeply the texts and rituals of the Holiday of Freedom.

Themes connecting the Haggadah and Israeli Society in 2024

For example, the Torah says Pharaoh went house to house to kidnap and murder every Hebrew male in the Nile and the Haggadah proclaims, "in every generation they rise up against us to wipe us out." Now having so recently reexperienced what we once thought of as the historic past, the pre-state reality of vulnerability to pogroms and ideologically and religiously motivated crimes against humanity, how do we adjust our worldview? In the kibbutz haggadot composed in the 1930s and 40s children asked new questions inserted into *Ma Nishtana* such as "why do so many people worldwide hate the Jews?" That question about perennial murderous antisemitism resounds even more today, especially in the Middle East and in the intellectual elites of the West. After such pain, Pesach raises the appropriateness of *Shfoh Hamatkha*, of the prayer for righteous revenge on the leaders of Hamas as opposed to the moral danger of educating people to hate the other? Can we learn to distinguish in our attitudes between the evil militant Islamic radical, the helpless Muslim civilians in Gaza, and the "righteous gentile" Israeli Bedouins who endangered their own lives to save their fellow Jewish citizens.

Dedication: The adapted Haggadah is dedicated to all the soldiers who have been killed while fighting Hamas in Gaza. In particular, it is a memorial to two young soldiers who were killed in the first weeks of the war, one the grandnephew of the designer of the Haggadah, Dvora Lifshitz, and one the grandson of David Dishon who co-authored the original *A Different Haggadah* (1997).

Mishael's qualifications: Rabbi Mishael Zion, who has semicha from Hovevei Torah and from the Hartman Israeli Rabbinical Program, is on the senior faculty of the Mandel Institute in Jerusalem. There he has been deeply involved in the cultural renaissance of Jewish society and the creative fusions within Israeli identity reflecting many ethnic backgrounds. Enclosed is an insightful essay he wrote for the Hartman Institute on the role of rabbis in Israel and the US in using traditional sources to address the challenges of Israeli society in its first month of mourning and its striving for spiritual resilience in October, 2023. His new Haggadah is another resource in nurturing an evolving Israeli identity.

Sample from revised Israeli Haggadah: Under the section of *Ma Nishtana*, the following original questions from the haggadot of the kibbutzim of the 1930-50s resound poignantly and powerfully in 2023:

"Contemporary" Versions of the *Ma Nishtana* from Kibbutz Haggadot (1930s-1950s)

Before and after the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 the secular kibbutzim issued new haggadot reflecting the dramatic events of Jewish history such as the Holocaust and the first Jewish army in 2,000 years. In recalling the genocide of Jewish boy babies in Egypt and the struggle for freedom from

persecution and slavery in Egypt, they could not help relating contemporary hopes and fears to the holiday of freedom. Most original in the kibbutz seder was the custom of composing contemporary questions for the young to ask their elders and then asking founders of the kibbutz to propose answers. Today after Oct 7, 2023, these spontaneous questions of 70 to 90 years ago resound with new urgency and poignancy.

For example, after the rise of Hitler and during World War Two (1933-1945) and after the beginning of the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936-1939) and the Israeli War of Independence (1948), kibbutz haggadot recorded the following unanswered questions posed by their children:

Why do they hate Jews in the whole world?

Why is so much blood shed in the world?

How different is this dark and dismal night from every other night! How strange and how bizarre is this world, in this year, in this generation! What is happening to us that human beings are turning into malevolent, predatory animals? What is happening to people whose consciences in their chests are silenced? How have we, our brothers, changed so much from other human beings, other creatures of God, from other mortals born to human mothers?

Why did we take up arms? For in every other era, we did not have the spirit in us to rise up and respond to our enemies in kind, but now we stand up in the gates of our towns to defend ourselves?

When will all the Jews of the Diaspora return to their land?

When will our land become a verdant garden?

When will peace reign in our land and in the whole world? (from Kibbutzim Ein Harod and Beit Oren, 1936)

Kibbutz Nahal Oz on the Gaza border (in whose community so many were massacred and kidnapped on Oct 7, 2023) wrote in their first Haggadah in 1956:

On all other nights our ancestors were slaves to Egypt subject to their taskmasters.

But on this night we are free and settled on the border of Egypt and our own hands are ready to defend our lives!

P. S. Mishael's English-language *A Night to Remember: Haggadah of Contemporary Voices* - Israeli and American – will be available to donor congregations at \$10 each (instead of \$19 each).

<https://haggadahsrus.com/product/a-night-to-remember-the-haggadah-of-contemporary-voices/>

The beautiful Israeli illustrations and much of the unique content of the original Israeli Haggadah is available in this Haggadah which is published in Cleveland. (Incidentally, the American publisher is in the

process of closing its doors and so the most recent printing is the last printing.)
Contact noam.zion@gmail.com for the discount.