



ADDING JOC VOICES TO “A NIGHT OF QUESTIONS”

A series of writings by Jews of Color to supplement “A Night of Questions”

Curated by the Tikkun Olam Commission of the Reconstructionist Movement, Rabbi Micah Weiss and Rabbi Asher Sofman

WHY THIS SUPPLEMENT?

In 1999, the Reconstructionist Press published *A Night of Questions*, a Passover Haggadah edited by Rabbi Joy Levitt and Rabbi Michael Strassfeld. In the 25 years since, the readings, instructions, prompts, and commentary found within its pages – its traditional inclusions and the innovations on every page – ensured that, wherever and whoever I happened to be that year, wise or wicked, uncomplicated or quiet, I had multiple ways into a genuine Passover experience. When my family read from the Haggadah, my heritage spoke to me in dozens of voices across time and space. All of us at the table had the opportunity to pipe in, too, adding to a centuries-long continuity of conversation, storytelling, and prayer.

Still, it was only part of my heritage. Only part of my Jewish heritage, even. The voices and traditions of Jews of Color, Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews, Jews informed by cultures far from Europe and all sorts of world Jews have yet to be spoken across many a seder plate. To begin to bring them in and grant them due honor, we have collected a few contemporary writings from Jews of Color in this supplement to the Reconstructionist Haggadah. We commit to sharing more in future years.

In their preface to *A Night of Questions*, Rabbis Levitt and Strassfeld write, “The goal expressed by Mordecai Kaplan in 1941 rings true for this new effort as well. We hope to ‘articulate the prayer that is in the heart of every Jew, the prayer for a world which will be rid of all Pharaohs, and in which God alone will be sovereign.’” May the words of Jews of Color in this supplement help us articulate the prayer in the heart of every Jew – of every person at our seder table – for a truly just and liberated world.



Rabbi Asher Sofman, Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion program coordinator at Reconstructing Judaism
March 2024



MAGGID: COLLECTIVE MEMORY

To read with A Night of Questions p. 41 or pp. 46-47

Every Passover, we are commanded to recall the past and to retell the story of our people's liberation from slavery in Egypt to freedom. And as we tell the story, we are asked to imagine that we ourselves were once slaves in Egypt, and now we are free. As a Black woman in America, the history of slavery is much closer in my collective memory than Israelite bondage. I often think about my ancestors who were brought to this country as slaves. I want to imagine and believe that they found comfort in the Biblical story of the Exodus, seeing themselves as the Israelite slaves and the slave owners as the pharaoh. And I also imagine them praying to God for freedom and never giving up hope.

As a Jew and an African-American, I carry the memories of people who were once enslaved. And I hold onto our collective memory of our escape from slavery into freedom. And, like my ancestors, I pray for the freedom of all who are enslaved, and I am hopeful that next year—and that one day—we will all be free.



Rabbi Sandra Lawson, Director of Racial Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Reconstructing Judaism

from [Minutes of Torah ep. 49](#), published March 29th, 2018



FIVE ADDITIONAL CHILDREN

To read with A Night of Questions p. 49

In each of us lives all four children – the wise one, the fearful or doubting one, the simple one, and the one who has not yet begun to inquire. Which of these children will we present to the world?

For our time, there are five more children: the child of the Atlantic Slave Trade, the child of colonialism, the child of war, the child of the Holocaust/Shoah, and the child of forced migrations. Many of these children did not survive to be with us. The children we have lost and those waiting for relief only ask, “Why?” For these children, we have no answers. Only a pledge:

We are not yet done and
will never be done until
we can promise with certainty:
NEVER AGAIN!



Chazzan Sabrina Sojourner, Co-Founding Director of KHAZBAR, from her own seder

MAROR AND MAGGID: LEST THEY INCREASE YET MORE

To read with A Night of Questions p. 53

They have reason to worry
because multiply we have
multiplied and we are the Other
African Latinx Asian In-between
by way of Shanghai Bnei Anusim
Cochin Jew Abayudaya
Jewish by way of mother
By way of father you challenge
Observant by way of secular parents
practicing
Baal Baalat Teshuvah
Jewish by Sefarad to the letter
by way of Yosef Caro
By way of the Rema
Strictly Halachic Jew
Neither Sefardi neither Mizrachi
neither Ashkenazi neither Israeli
Still a Diaspora Jew

I eat with my fingers
I dine with fine crystal
I have cheeks burning
Peach ruddy roasted warm coffee
Desert mocha
Midnight blue black Jew

Single mother empty nester child
queer straight shut-in
Transgender Morah Chazzan Jew
Prepubescent adolescent young adult
new parent
Post-doc Jew with learning variations
Torah-wielding Jew by Choice
childless by biology
Partnered married separated
Divorced widowed adopted single
36 under 36 awesome
Menopausal lay leader
Rabbi Jew
Left right center
Jew in the pew
Pew Report Jew
Forever an immigrant forever Yisrael
Forever wrestling honestly
Proud to be a Jew

Continue to next page



*second page of Maror and Maggid: Lest They Increase
Yet More*

And yes, you're very welcome
I'm an Asian Jew
You can look at me
You can see me
I'm a Jew of Color
And I claim my space
But I get it
Gotta justify presence
in almost every Jewish space
So where were we again?
Yes, I am Jewish
This is my name
I am not intermarried
And I did not take his name
Yes, I am a convert
And if I am, what then
Yes, I am a Rabbi
I am here just like you
And yes I am a Jew
So where were we again
Now tell me
All about you



Rabbi Mira Rivera, Rabbi-in-Residence and Board-Certified Chaplain at JCC Harlem and the LUNAR Collective, a contribution to the LUNAR Collective haggadah



**RECONSTRUCTING
JUDAISM**

MIDWIFING RESISTANCE

To read with A Night of Questions p. 54

...I am reminding myself of the Inquisitions – a period that lasted several hundred years, and did not officially end until 1834 – when Jews in places like Spain, Portugal, and parts of Italy had to find covert ways to conduct a Seder that would not alert the authorities and get them arrested, or even killed.

In my cookbook Too Good To Passover: Sephardic & Judeo-Arabic Seder Menus and Memories from Africa, Asia and Europe, Rabbi Barbara Aiello, an Italian-American living in Calabria, Italy, explained her family's tradition of a Seder on the first and fifth nights of Passover to honor Christian neighbors who might have allowed their Jewish friends to kasher a room in their own homes on the fifth night, when the Inquisition authorities would not be suspecting the Jews of 'Judaizing'. This fifth night is called Seder Hamishi (from hamesh in Hebrew, meaning 'five,' and also related to the Yiddish slang word hamish, meaning 'friendly, welcoming') has become a way of honoring not only those Jews who had to hide their Judaism or had been forced to convert to Christianity (the Anusim), but a way of remembering those Christians who helped the Jews even upon risk of their own lives. For the Seder Hamishi she always invites her non-Jewish friends.



Jennifer Abadi, Sephardic and Judeo-Arabic cookbook author, excerpted from A Seder During a Time of Uncertainty and Fear. Again, published on JenniferAbadi.com.



THE PLAGUES

To read with A Night of Questions p. 61

Ya know, a lot of folks reengineer the plagues to account for the varied ways systematic oppression plays out in our world.

And yet, the plagues we recount in the exodus story are AGAINST the system.

They were in service of dismantling it.

So this pesach, my goal has been to think about the ways we can and have already been plagues to racial capitalism this year and would love to know:

How have you been a plague?



Koach Baruch Frazier,
Au.D., Reconstructionist
Rabbinical College '24,
posted on Facebook on
March 26, 2021

