



Association of Reform Zionists of America
Connecting Reform Jews and Israel

presents:

4 Israel Passover

An ARZA Haggadah Supplement

Every year at the Pesach Seder, we reflect upon four different types of Jews, each of whom responds differently to the Pesach experience. The same can be said for our relationship to Israel; as Reform Jews, we have many diverse experiences and perspectives within our community – even within our own families. This year, ARZA urges you to bring Israel into your Pesach experience by adding the following commentary to your Seder.

★ **The Four Types and the Passover Story** ★

Year after year we read about the four types of Jews; the wise one, the wicked one, the simple one and the one who does not know how to ask. The **wise** one asks about the complex details of the holiday, its rules and rituals. We respond in kind, supplying as much detail as we can.

The one who is called **wicked** asks, "What does this ritual mean to you?" Tradition sees the "wicked" one as having excluded him/herself



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from the community. Such self-exclusion is an affront to the fundamental principle of Jewish Peoplehood, and we are advised to respond with an answer that stings as much as the question did: *Because you exclude yourself from the people, if you had been there in Egypt, you would not have been redeemed.*

The **simple** Jew has a simple world view and asks a simple question: "What is all this?" We are told to give an appropriately simple answer: *It was a wondrous thing that God did for us, bringing us out of Egypt!*

And then there is the Jew who **does not know how to ask**, or does not know, perhaps, that asking is an important, sacred act. For this one, we are instructed to start at the beginning and tell the whole story, for story-telling is the source of our life.

★ The Four Types and Israel ★

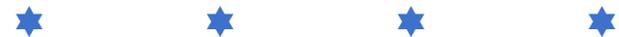
Regarding Israel too, there are four types. The **wise** one asks about the complexities of Israel. She knows that Israel's story is not a simple one, that its history, policies, and Jewish identity cannot be boiled down to a sound-bite. She knows that even a seemingly simple thing, such as the delight of having a Jewish state, is complicated in a place where some Jews argue about whether Reform Judaism is legitimate and whether women should be Rabbis, and where a fifth of the population is not Jewish at all. These complexities do not make her uncomfortable, for her love of Israel is strong enough to withstand even the most convoluted realities. She wants to know, and so we tell her.

The one who is called **wicked** asks us pointed, barbed questions. "Why do I even need a Jewish state? I'm an American. I live here in safety and security, and enjoy a Jewish life of personal spirituality and Torah study. The Israel issue only drags Jewish life down into the worst that modern geo-politics has to offer. Israel doesn't accept my rabbi. Israelis refuse to compromise with the Palestinians. They treat their non-Jewish citizens as second-class citizens. What a disgraceful mess!"

But here, we suggest that you depart from the advice of the Hagaddah. Do not push him away or allow him to exclude himself from the conversation. Instead, reach out to bring him in, to teach him that asking tough questions is crucial to *tikkun olam* - fixing the world. Acknowledge that to wrestle is to receive a blessing, as our ancestor was told, "No longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have wrestled with God and with humans and you have prevailed!" (Genesis 32:29). Ask only that he listen to our answers with the same openness and love as we use in hearing his questions. Whether or not we can convince him, we want him to understand that the Israel conversation is a part of his Jewish life, as it is of ours.

The **simple** ones paint their questions with a broad brush: "Why Israel?" To them we reply with simple truth: *Because being a Jew is not only about timeless spirituality, God and Torah, but also about history, Peoplehood and an ancient connection to the Land of Israel as well.* As God said to us, "I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God... and I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you..." (Exodus 6:7-8).

As for those who **cannot even formulate a question**, who have not even begun to think about Israel, we must take them by the hand, and bring them to the land, to visit, to walk its streets, to listen to its music, to see its strength and drink in its vitality; in this we are guided by the words spoken by God to Abraham, "Up! Walk around the land through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you!" (Genesis 13:17).



Everyone at ARZA wishes you, your families, and your communities a sweet and joyous Pesach. This year, may we all come to a new and deeper understanding of the ancient promise, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Chag sameach!