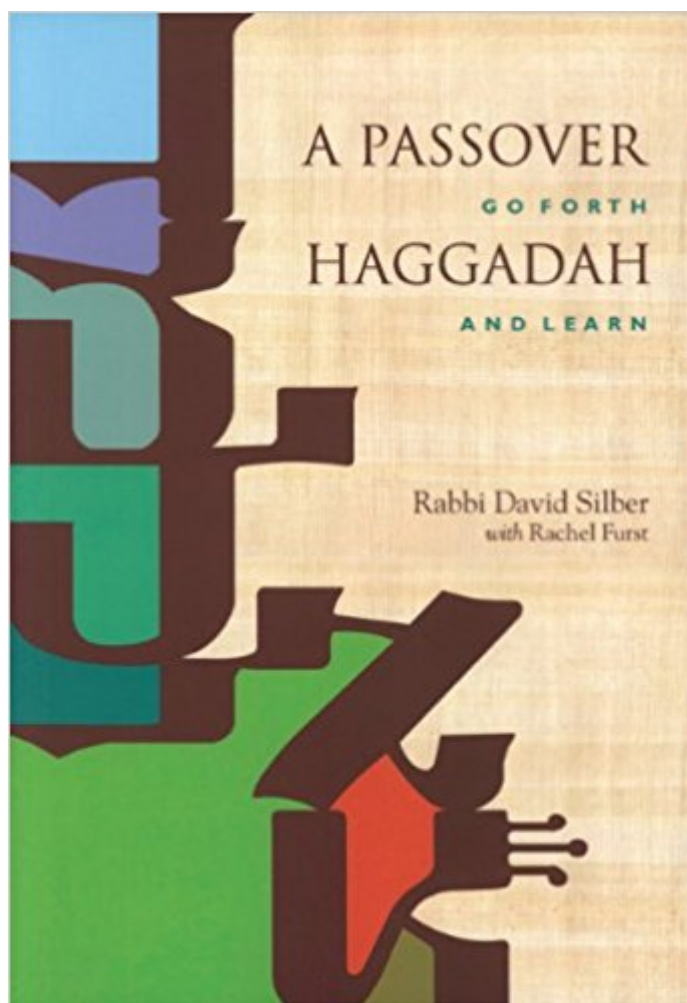


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A Passover Haggadah: Go Forth And Learn



Synopsis

Hebrew and English text with new commentary and essays. Rabbi Silber has given us two books in one: the Haggadah itself, in English and Hebrew, with his seder commentary and a collection of essays that provide close readings of the classic biblical and rabbinic texts that inform Seder-night ritual and narration. Both parts work beautifully together to illuminate the central themes of Passover: peoplehood, Covenant, our relationship to ritual, God's presence in history, and other important issues that resonate with us all. Just as midrash attempts to bridge the gap between ancient text and contemporary meaning, Rabbi Silber's Haggadah provides new sources of insight that deepen the Passover experience for today's readers.

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Customer Reviews

"For those with a serious Jewish background, or serious intellectual curiosity, [A Passover Haggadah] is a gold mine." —Jay Michaelson, *The Forward* (Jay Michaelson *The Forward*) "This Haggadah is groundbreaking in its presentation of new, creative, peshat-based approaches to the traditional text of the Seder." —The Lookstein Center (The Lookstein Center) "Rabbi Silber's midrashic method is deeply knowledgeable but never freighted with excessive reference. . . . This is a haggadah to study, slowly turning over the literary links that allow one part of the TANAKH to talk to another." —Jewish Book World (Jewish Book World) "The essays, when taken together with Rabbi David Silber's gifted writings, will surely further help enhance one's appreciation of the holiness and historic importance of this sacred time of

year. **• Jewish Eye (Jewish Eye)** “Under the expert and artistic hand of Rabbi Silber, A Passover Haggadah yields meanings beyond what even the informed reader imagines. The commentary, like the haggadah itself, is gripping on the first reading, and even more rewarding on subsequent ones. **• Rabbi David Wolpe, Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, and author of Why Faith Matters (Rabbi David Wolpe)** “With remarkable creativity, sensitivity, and ear for nuance, Rabbi David Silber illuminates the Haggadah text, Seder practices, and the larger biblical and rabbinic contexts in which these are rooted. This volume will help create a Seder full of meaning, poignancy, and enthusiasm. **• David Shatz, professor of philosophy, Yeshiva University** (David Shatz)

Hebrew and English Haggadah text with new commentary and essays

Rabbi Silber’s commentary on the Passover Haggadah is breathtaking. After reading the essays in this book, I felt that I could understand the underlying themes of the Seder clearly for the first time. I have a huge assortment of Haggadot which I have studied through the years, but I have found most commentaries to be repetitive and commonplace. However, when I studied Rabbi Silber’s essays, I realized I was learning something profound and original, but also totally faithful to the text and perhaps the underlying meaning that the authors of the text intended. Rabbi Silber has a profound mastery of Biblical text which is demonstrated throughout his essays. If you are searching to find meaning in the yearly ritual of the Seder, than this book is a must read. I recommend that you start reading the essays several weeks before Passover begins and discuss with your friends and family the themes Rabbi Silber raises well in advance of your Seder.

The books are good. There is only one volume, but the English-formatted, i.e. read front to back, is a series of small monograph discussions of the first 100 pages or so with some general exploration of themes and could be more tightly edited, but has much of use. The second half, Hebrew-Formatted, i.e. read from Back to front is a mixed English and Hebrew Haggadah that is nicely illustrated and has good fonts for both Hebrew and English text and is quite usable with its own areas of exposition by annotated text. The work is well worth the price. For the uninitiated in Passover, the Seder means order, as in the order of the setting and its components. It does not mean the order of its clarity of reasoning. Much of a Passover evening is devoted, ideally at least, to contemplation of the underlying meaning of Symbols, texts quoted in the Seder and what logical unity there is to the whole. The purpose of the prayers, questions, songs, accoutrements and the

meal are often discussed at length and to no complete conclusion. This is reasonable as a full conclusion has yet to be reached in 2000 years that everybody (at least those interested in the business) can agree to. Multiple works out there have various takes on the course of the evening's events and all have some seeming validity. Often the points of views and the conclusions can be quite contrary. A favorite part is the 4 Questions: "Why is this night different from all other nights" There are answers to be had which employs a good part of the evening. This is a major focus of quite varied theses. I can count out some 45-50 discrete ones that I have read thus far. The nature of annotations and the stated explanations, at least in this as in much of Commentaries available for Mishnah or Talmud, are subjective. There is ultimately no single correct answer or even manner of thought and there is an advantage to having many similar works to peruse to understand the complexity of what is a Seder. This work is a worthy member to join many others of its ilk.

Highly informative and well written.

Nice translation. Using Lord instead of Hashem. Uses masculine when proper translation calls for it, but not when it doesn't (e.g., 4 children). No mealy-mouthed stuff regarding Pour out your wrath. Nothing skipped. No distracting cartoons. Very nice commentary below the text of the Haggadah, plus real insightful essays at the back. Just what you would expect from the extremely close reading that Rabbi Silber brings to Biblical and other Jewish texts. Printed on nice paper too.

We were classmates with David Silber at Yeshiva University's High School, College and Rabbinical School. We studied Talmud together as chavrusas in High School in the shiur of Rabbi Gershon Yankelwitz (who is now 100 years old, may he live to 120). Silber went on to found the remarkable Drisha Institute on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and has spent his career in Torah education. Rabbi Silber is an Orthodox Jewish scholar of major significance with the broad and deep knowledge of a first rate Talmid Chacham. While in high school, we recall that he placed among the highest finalists in the world Bible contest. Silber knew the entire Tanakh by heart and could cite it with great facility on any topic. He is known now as an expert in the entire range of Jewish learning and as a master teacher of our tradition. Silber's book appeared in time for Passover last year, A Passover Haggadah: Go Forth and Learn. His collaborator in writing this book is Rachel Furst, an accomplished scholar and teacher in her own right. Although we single out Rabbi Silber here, all of our comments and compliments ought to be allocated between both authors. This is a volume of

great erudition and careful learning. Silber derives his insights from a range of sources including the work of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, but not limited by that influence. Silber's writings show an originality of theological insight that is deeply rooted in the classical texts and sources and informed by a wide ranging knowledge of the liberal arts. The essays are works of pedagogic mastery. Silber has taught this material for decades and over time has highly refined his presentations. He balances his use of previous scholarly sources between the rabbinic and the academic and arrives often at original insights that are compelling. Thus, the essays in this volume are parts of the book that will be cited by many who seek fresh and modern angles of vision into the old and established contents of the Tanakh and rabbinic writings. Silber's comments in this book's Haggadah-text-section are substantial, original and faithful to the rabbinic record. Interspersed here are not just nuggets of interpretation, but also coherent essays and excurses on topics brought to the Seder table by the Haggadah text. The book authentically amplifies the strong and weak aspects of the Haggadah itself. The Haggadah book is a complex composite of liturgy, learning and rituals. It's notable that we call the occasion on which we read and enact the book the "Seder" as that implies order and organization. Indeed the Haggadah is the one rabbinic book that comes with its own embedded table of contents - a listing of the fifteen Seder sections. Yet organization with a list of contents does not imply a tight coherence to a set theme. The Haggadah ranges widely and richly across the landscape of Israelite and rabbinic history and ritual. It hops often without warning from one mode of expression and rite to another and from one crucial topic in Jewish religious life and thought to another. Silber and Furst enrich this winding and even dizzying Haggadah-journey that we embark on each year with the expertise of seasoned and expert scouts. At the end of the trip with this marvelous guide book we can safely say that these pathfinders took us on a great adventure with deep and keen perceptions into every stop along the way.

This is an excellent companion to the small haggadahs, as it explains each detail where your fellows may ask questions. I haven't read it in detail, but that's ok too--it can be used for reference. Take off one star because it is awkward to read at the Seder table.

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