



7 WAYS TO ADDRESS OCTOBER 7 AT YOUR FAMILY SEDER

Why is this Passover different from all other Passovers? So many of us are still reeling from the October 7 attack in Israel and the ongoing war. And while a seder brings the opportunity to lean on tradition, you may also want to acknowledge this unprecedented time in a way that feels right for your gathering. We hope this guide of seven extra rituals and elements for your seder offers an opportunity to reflect, mourn and celebrate as a family and community this Passover.

1. Empty chairs at your table

While some families leave an empty chair for the prophet Elijah, you may choose to leave more empty chairs this year to recognize all those celebrating without lost loved ones at their tables this Passover. You may choose to include images and names of victims or hostages that you're honoring.

Before starting the seder, say: Let's take a moment to talk about the extra empty chairs at our table — they represent people who will not be able to celebrate with their families this year.

2. Extra maror? Changing up your seder plate

During what feels like an especially bitter time, adding extra maror, bitter herbs, to your seder plate can give room for that grief. Other additions to your seder plate that might feel especially resonant include an olive or olive oil as a symbol of the olive branch — a hope for peace. You can also subtract things from your plate to honor those experiencing hunger.

When introducing the seder plate, say: You will notice the seder plate looks a little different tonight — we have extra maror to note an especially bitter year, and we've added the olive/olive oil to remind us of hopes of peace.

3. A fifth question

The Four Questions, traditionally recited by the youngest guest at the table, is one of the most touching parts of the Passover seder, a reminder of Jewish continuity and survival. This year, you may want to ask the central question one more time — “ma nishtanah ha'layla haze mikol ha'leylot?” — as a chance for guests at the table to share how this Passover feels different than other years. Ideally, you can give everyone's feelings respect and space, and not make it a moment for bitter family arguments. This could be a good chance for kids to express their feelings and struggles about these past months, and for adults to be vulnerable.

After singing the fourth question, say: Now we are going to sing the question one more time, and everyone can take a turn answering: How does Passover feel different to you this year?

4. The four precious children

As we talk about the four children and their various questions — or lack thereof — let us be grateful for all the children at Passover tables this year, for all their questions (yes, even their million “whys”), and for how much richer they make our world.

After the four children, say: Let us remember that all children — wicked, wise, innocent and those who do not know how to ask — deserve safety, peace and space to prosper.

5. Extra plagues

What are the plagues we feel we are experiencing this year? Let’s pour out some extra wine or juice for them. How does the plague of darkness feel especially connected to this moment? Discuss.

After the ten plagues, use one of these prompts:

- *What does the plague of darkness mean to us this year? What is one thing we’ve done to bring in light?*
- *Now, let us go around the table and everyone can say what has felt like the biggest plague of these past few months.*

6. A moment of gratitude

“Hakarat todah” is the Hebrew term for gratitude. We can take a moment to say what we’re all grateful for at this seder as we finish our meal with full tummies. We can also appreciate how this will not be the experience of everyone this Passover.

As you near the end of the seder, say: We feel so fortunate to be able to be together tonight. We feel such a sense of gratitude — “hakarat todah” in Hebrew — for being able to hold this seder. And yet we think, again, of all those who cannot.

7. Next year in Jerusalem

As many of us say this traditional line at the end of our seder, let us consider what we would like the next year in Jerusalem to look like. What are our hopes and dreams for the reality in the holy city and land? Consider closing your seder with a song that connects us to these wishes, like “Oseh Shalom.”

At the end of the seder, say: Before we all say “L’shanah Ha’ba’ah be’Yerushalayim,” let us try to imagine what we’d like next year in Jerusalem to look like.