

FREEDOM

A RESOURCE FOR PESACH

Reflection upon learning
with a partner

בְּרִזָּל בְּבְרִזָּל יִחַד
וְאִישׁ יִחַד פְּנִי-רֵיעָהוּ

משלי כז:ז

As iron sharpens iron,
so too one person sharpens
the wits of their friend

Proverbs 27:17

An invitation to learn

Ritual, song, and the retelling of our most treasured story create rich opportunities for Jewish learning at the Seder table. Inspired by the Ma Nishtana traditionally asked by our youngest, Limmud has compiled an alternative four questions for you to explore with your family and friends this Pesach.

Pesach is often known as *z'man cheiruteinu*, the time of our freedom. This year, as we mark the 70th anniversary of

the establishment of the State of Israel, these texts reflect upon the relationship between homeland and diaspora, Jews and non-Jews, and the nature of freedom itself.

We invite you to learn with a partner or group, in the spirit of participation, reflection, and transformation which characterises the model of Chavruta.

Chag Pesach Sameach!

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THE FIRST QUESTION. ARE JEWS OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL FREE?

Deuteronomy 30:3-4

³Then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will once again bring you together from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

Translation: adapted from Sefaria

From Auto-Emancipation

Since the Jew is nowhere at home, nowhere regarded as a native, he remains an alien everywhere. That he himself and his ancestors as well are born in the country does not alter this fact in the least. In the great majority of cases, he is treated as a stepchild, as a Cinderella; in the most favorable cases he is regarded as an adopted child whose rights may be questioned; never is he considered a legitimate child of the fatherland.

Leon Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation*, 1882, Translation: Dr. D. S. Blondheim

Freedom Assembly for Soviet Jews, Washington, D.C., 1973



https://www.flickr.com/photos/center_for_jewish_history/6891546665

דברים ל:ג-ד

וְיָשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת-שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצֶךָ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה: ⁴אִם-יִהְיֶה נִדְחָךָ בְּקֶצֶה הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ:

⁴Even if you are driven to the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you up, from there He will take you back.

From The Pittsburgh Platform

We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron.

Isaac M. Wise (and others), *The Pittsburgh Platform*, 1885

Points to consider

What freedoms do Jews have when scattered?
What freedoms do Jews have when gathered?

Are Jews most free as a nation, a religious community or something else entirely?

Are some Diaspora Jews more free than others?

THE SECOND QUESTION. ARE JEWS IN ISRAEL FREE?

Tosefta Avodah Zara 5:2

תוספתא עבודה זרה ה:ב

It is better for a person to live in Israel in a city inhabited mostly by idol worshippers, rather than outside the Land in a city that is completely Jewish. It is taught that living in Israel is equal to all the mitzvot of the Torah.

ישרה אדם בארץ ישראל אפילו בעיר שרובה עובדי כוכבים ולא בחו"ל אפילו בעיר שכולה ישראל. מלמד ששיבת ארץ ישראל שקולה כנגד כל מצות שבתורה.

Translation: adapted from Sefaria

The State of Israel's Law of Return (1950)

Every Jew has the right to come to this country as an oleh... an oleh's visa shall be granted to every Jew who has expressed his desire to settle in Israel.

Translation: mfa.gov.il

Wedding in Cyprus – The Modern Zionist Irony

When we made the decision to move to Israel, one of our greatest hopes was that our children would find nice Jewish Israelis to marry and get hitched in the one and only Jewish state... In a modern Zionist irony that is in equal parts infuriating and tragic, Merav and Gabe flew to Cyprus where the mayor of Larnaca did the honors... They did it because, as Merav told me, they didn't want to have anything to do with the Israeli Chief Rabbinate which has exclusivity over Jewish marriage in Israel, and that refuses to allow people to marry in accordance with customs that are not fully Orthodox. In Merav and Gabe's case that meant having a fully egalitarian ceremony, with a presiding rabbi not on the rabbinate's officially approved list.

Brian Blum, jpost.com, November 2016

Can Religious Pluralism and an Official Rabbinate Coexist in Israel?

I don't want a culture war between the pluralistic and the Orthodox. Orthodoxy adds a lot to our cultural scene. I wouldn't like to live in an Israel that didn't have haredi Jews. But just as much as their Jewish needs deserve to be met, so do mine. In Israel you have many secular or unaffiliated Jews who still are connected and for whom Judaism is a very big part of their lives... The Jewish world is moving toward a post-denominational era, and I think that is a good thing... It's not about the organizations or the streams or the denominations; it's about the Jews.

Ruth Calderon, momentmag.com, May 2014

Points to consider

Are you more free living as a non-practicing Jew in Israel or as a practicing Jew outside of Israel?

Any Jew can make aliyah yet some aspects of Israeli Jewish life are controlled by specific streams of Judaism. What does this mean for Jewish freedom in Israel?

Would Israel and the Jewish world be more or less free if Ruth Calderon is right that we are moving to a post-denominational era?

THE THIRD QUESTION. ARE NON-JEWS IN ISRAEL FREE?

Jeremiah 7:6-7

ירמיהו ז:ו-ז

‘If you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; if you do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place; if you do not follow other gods, to your own harm, ⁷then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever.

Translation: adapted from Sefaria

יִתּוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂקוּ וְדָם נָקִי אַל-תִּשְׁפְּכוּ בַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֶחָדִי מֵאֱלֹהִים אַחֲרָיִם לֹא תִלְכוּ לְרַע לְכֶם: ⁷וְשִׁבַּנְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה בְּאָרְץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבֹּתֵיכֶם לְמִן-עוֹלָם וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 61a

תלמוד בבלי גיטין ס"א א

The Mishna teaches: One does not protest against poor gentiles who come to take gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the produce in the corner of the field, which is given to the poor, although they are meant exclusively for the Jewish poor, on account of the ways of peace. Similarly, the Sages taught in a *baraita*: “One sustains poor gentiles along with poor Jews, and one visits sick gentiles along with sick Jews, and one buries dead gentiles along with dead Jews. All this is done on account of the ways of peace, to foster peaceful relations between Jews and gentiles”.

Translation: Sefaria

אִין מִמְחִין בִּיד עֲנִי נְכָרִים בְּלִקְטָה וּבִשְׂכַחַתָּה וּבִפְאָה מִפְּנֵי דְרַכֵּי שְׁלוֹם: ת"ר מִפְּרָנְסִים עֲנִי נְכָרִים עִם עֲנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִבְּקָרִין חוֹלֵי נְכָרִים עִם חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקוֹבְרִין מֵתֵי נְכָרִים עִם מֵתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי דְרַכֵּי שְׁלוֹם:

Fight Over Jewish Nation-State Bill Smolders

Speaking at the First Israeli Congress on Judaism and Democracy, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked blasted the Supreme Court for going too far in interpreting the power of the country’s democratic pillars, and for doing so constantly at the expense of the Jewish pillar. “From a constitutional perspective, greater emphasis is given these days to the value of democracy, and we need to give the courts constitutional tools to enhance the balance toward the value of Jewishness,” she said at the event in Jerusalem. “The State of Israel is a Jewish state and not a state for all of its nationalities.”

Yonah Jeremy Bob, jpost.com, February 2018

We Will Provide Them Shelter and Refuge

We all remember the ships with Jewish refugees in the '30s that wandered the surface of the seven seas, asking to enter a specific country, or any number of countries, only to encounter rejection. Today, there exists the state of the Jews. We have not forgotten. We will behave with humanity. We will bring these unfortunate people, refugees saved by our ship from drowning in the depths of the sea, to our country. We will provide them shelter and refuge.

Menachem Begin discussing the plight of the Vietnamese ‘Boat People’, 20th June 1977. Translation: mfa.gov.il

Points to consider

How free are non-Jews in Israel today? Are peaceful relations between Jews and non-Jews being fostered in Israel?

What does a Jewish state mean to you?

What should the responsibilities of a Jewish state be to its non-Jewish citizens? What about to non-Jewish refugees who arrive in Israel?

THE FOURTH QUESTION. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?

Avadim Hayinu, from the Haggadah

עבדים היינו

Slaves is what we were – slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. And wrested free, were we, by the Lord God-of-Us, lifted out of that place in the mighty hand of an outstretched arm. And if the Holy One, blessed is He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then what of us? We, and our children, and our children's children, would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

Translation: The New American Haggadah

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים, ויוציאנו ה' אלקינו משם ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה. ואלו לא הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אבותינו ממצרים, הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו משעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים.

Make Those Waters Part

Let us retell the story of our struggle for the Promised Land
Let us remember how freedom is won so our children will understand

Once we were slaves in Egypt, our people and our land were apart

But when Moses stood before that troubled sea, he could
Make those waters part

Somewhere tonight lives a free man

Somewhere else freedom's just a song of the heart,

We must find the river flowing between them,
And we must make those waters part.

Now we are slaves in our own time
The many at the hands of the few,
And we who've crossed the sea of slavery before,
Must remember what we must do:
In the name of the falsely imprisoned,
In the name of all the homeless at heart,
In the name of all the history that binds us,
We must make those waters part.

Troubled seas rising around us
Sometimes the promised land seems hidden from view
So we retell these stories, that's how we start –
To make those waters part.

Doug Mishkin, American Jewish Summer: Songs Of The Jewish Youth Camping Movement, 2006

Points to consider

Can exploring our history of slavery make us more free today? What role does the retelling of the story have?

What is Jewish about freedom? As Jews, are we more or less free than other people?

Can we choose to be free?



Limmud is an international community of Jewish learning founded in the UK in 1980.

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Limmud promises that wherever you find yourself, Limmud can take you one step further on your Jewish journey.

Find out for yourself and get involved at limmud.org

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טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנַיִם מִן־הָאֶחָד
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלָהֶם
שָׂכָר טוֹב בְּעַמְלָם
קהלת ד:ט

Two are better than one,
because they have
a greater reward
for their toil

Ecclesiastes 4:9



To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, UJIA is proud to support Limmud Publications with its 2018 resources.

We hope you've enjoyed learning with Limmud this Pesach. Limmud is a charity which relies on your support to continue its activities, including the costs of this resource. We would hugely appreciate it if you can [give us a donation](#) to help with the costs of this and all our learning activities.