The Men's Seder™
A Haggadah-Based Exploration of Contemporary Men's Issues

Created by Rabbi Dan Moskovitz and Rabbi Perry Netter
A Project of the Men of Reform Judaism (MRJ)
The MRJ Men’s Seder Haggadah

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Why A Men’s Seder?

Adolescence is not an easy time for anyone; try going through those hormonal changes while being a biblical legend. Joseph was a complicated teenager, to say the least. From early in his childhood, his father had great ambitions for him. So did God. Joseph himself, believed that he was destined for greatness. And he was not shy about sharing his dreams of grandeur, his vision of power and influence, his inflated sense of self-importance. He made sure everyone he knew was aware of his healthy self-image, even at the risk of offending those he loved and cherished. And offend he did. So much so, that the relations between Joseph and his siblings were strained to the breaking point.

And yet, some time later Joseph was at home and his brothers were out tending sheep. In spite of the tension between them, in spite of the apparent unwillingness of the brothers to allow Joseph to be with them, still, Joseph went out to look for his brothers (Genesis 37:14). There was something within Joseph that could not allow himself to be isolated from other men, even if the relationship was damaged, even if his brothers thought they hated him. There was something Joseph needed more than anything else: the company of other men.

Every contemporary man understands Joseph’s need to go out to look for his brothers. There are certain experiences that only men can share. There are specific expectations that only men have. There are certain challenges that only men face. And there are certain things that can only be understood by men. Men need the company of men, to be men.

Where does a contemporary man go to find male bonding? Where does a man go to find a relationship with other men that is not competitive, that is not comparative, that is not threatening and dehumanizing? Some might find it in the all-male world of the yeshiva, but few of us feel, for a multiplicity of reasons, that the yeshiva is our place. Others find it in the military, but truth is, most men do not enlist in the service. Still others find it along the third base line, or at mid-court, but men’s issues run much deeper than sports.

We believe this is the arena and the mandate of religion, to provide an environment where each and every one of us feels safe, accepted, loved and not judged. We believe that religion is where a man can go and not be evaluated for his material possessions, or his notoriety, or his romantic conquests, or the power of his biceps. We believe that traditionally, religion was the place where ultimate questions were asked
and answered. And we believe that the experience of a male Seder offers the tools to achieve what men need.

The Passover Seder, directed by the words of the Haggadah, has always been a night of questions and answers, of challenges and struggles, of eating and singing and laughing and bonding. It is the ideal structure for exploring those issues which pertain specifically to men, to be discussed by men, to be wrestled with by men, to be shared by men. Resolution of these issues does not take place in isolation. Like Joseph before us, we need to go out and look for our brothers, brothers who give us the space to express our deepest feelings, brothers who feel free enough to share their feelings with us.

This is the goal of the MRJ Men’s Haggadah. We offer this text as a springboard for open and honest reflection and sharing. The power of a shared male experience is now in your hands.

Rabbi Dan Moskovitz  
Rabbi Perry Netter

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For ordering additional copies of this Haggadah, please contact Men of Reform Judaism, 633 Third Avenue, New York NY 10017 tel: 212 650 4100; email: MRJ@urj.org
Acknowledgements:

When we first began to discuss the idea of a Men’s Seder, some questioned the very premise of the idea. Many argued, not inaccurately that for centuries the seder was dominated by male themes, symbols and language and to create a Men’s Seder was both redundant and a step backwards in the development of Jewish identity.

Others, ourselves included openly wondered if men would be drawn to and engaged by the experience - to paraphrase a certain baseball movie, if we built a Men’s Seder would all who are hungry for male bonding come and eat?

Over three years we grappled with those questions, experimented with various formats and ideas and challenged the assumptions - the resulting work is what you hold in your hands. This Haggadah would not have been possible without the support of our congregations Temple Beth Am of Los Angeles, CA and Temple Judea of Tarzana, CA.

A special Thank You to Hazan Mike Stein of Temple Aliyah, in Woodland Hills, CA. Hazan Stein wrote the Men’s Dayenu that you will find herein and brought rhythm, voice and his beautiful neshamah to our first two sederim. Thank you Mike!

Thank you also to Craig Taubman and Craig & Co. for organizing, “Let My People Sing” A community Passover Festival in Los Angeles. Let My People Sing helped launch the first Man Seder in 2005 by giving us a forum through which to share our vision, and Craig came up with the cool name!

Thank you to the 200 plus men who attended the first two Men’s Sederim - we built it but you filled it with your spirit and gave us the encouragement to share the experience with others.

Lastly, thank you to Doug Barden and the Men of Reform Judaism for believing in this project and making this Haggadah possible.
How To Use This Haggadah:

In Jewish tradition the Passover Seder was always a time more about questions than answers. From the Four Questions asked by the youngest child to the piercing questions of the Rabbis of rabbinic tradition, the Seder night was about questioning our past so we might understand our present and make adjustments for our future. This Seder honors that sacred heritage. Throughout this Haggadah you will find many types of questions, some are intended for personal reflection, some are to be discussed with the men at your table and some may in fact lead to more questions.

At certain points along the way you will see this symbol:

The symbol means you’re supposed to do something, or to pay attention. Imagine how life would be different if every time we had to do something or pay attention we were given a sign? (Probably best to hide this sign from your spouse or boss.)

During the Seder experience we employ a facilitating device called a “Card Pass”. The Card Pass allows each man to fill out his answer to a question on an index card in complete anonymity. As instructed in the Haggadah, do not write your name or any identifying information on your card. Collect the cards of each man at your table, shuffle and redistribute them. Everyone will assume to get a different man’s card and no one will know if you happen to get your own so don’t shout out if you do. Once the cards are redistributed, each man will read the answer written on the card in front of him and the discussion will proceed.

Some groups have found that the Seder experience is enhanced when each man is given a hand drum to play in rhythm with the music and spirit of the Seder experience. Drumming provides a sense of community and a freeing of the male spirit that men don’t easily express.

At the back of this Haggadah you will find additional questions and exercises that may supplement or supplant those in the central text. No matter how many times we confront a question our answer changes based on our life experience at the time, from year to year or between sederim you may want to consider some of the additional questions for further reflection and discovery.
For Our Sons…

may you grow to be Free Men.
We Are Free Men:

"When I sit down in a public place, beside a swimming pool, or at a park, I relax and feel good if there is no one else around. If another man arrives, I first run a check that he is no physical threat – that he is not about to mug me. No one has ever mugged me or hurt me or even picked a fight with me since 4th grade, but the feeling is there. Then I get to assessing whether he is stronger, has better clothes, or is more athletic, in better shape, how do I match up? If he has a woman with him, I try to figure out what she sees in him if she is good looking I question her motivation. If the parking lot is within view, I check out his car for comparison with my own. Even if he is friendly and a conversation starts, I have to fight the urge to mention my achievements, what an important person I am – to subtly start winning the contest. An inner competition never stops – I seem caught in a basically hostile and insecure obsession with comparisons."


Tonight, this Seder is about retraining ourselves to change this damaging and isolating pattern. Its is about teaching ourselves to see other men as brothers, tonight we are searching for our brothers, tonight we are safe in the company of men, tonight we are our brother’s keeper. Together as Jewish men we strive to free ourselves from the thoughts and practices that enslave us and to embody the blessing:

ברוך אתה עון אדוני מלך העולם אשר נעשה בן זורין.
Baruch ata Adonai elohenu melech ha-olam she-asani ben horin.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has made me to be a free man.
Meet the Men at Your Table:

Carl Jung once observed that men and women have different distinctive traits. A man’s sense of value, his identity, and his major choices in life all aim at accomplishing something: achievement. Women, on the other hand, are relational, driven toward connection, nurturing, sharing and supporting. He observed that around age 40 men experience a shift in perspective, men who have worked hard all their lives to fulfill their masculine perspective (achievement) become slowly aware of what might be called their missing feminine side (relationships) and begin to regret its absence in their lives. This regret is best described by one word, loneliness, and is expressed in the question, who do I really know?


Before we go any further introduce yourself to the people at your table, but don’t say what you do for a living. We are not defined by our jobs, careers or achievements. Who are you beyond how you make a living?
**Kadesh**

*Blessing over the Fruit of the Vine*

To ‘make kiddush’ is to declare a moment to be holy. It is to invite God in to the most intimate of experiences and to recognize that something extra ordinary is taking place. It is our sincere hope that this Seder is holy as well, that as we raise our glasses and sanctify this gathering of brothers we invite God in - into this Seder, into our relationships, into our lives.

ברוך אתה יהוה מלך העולם, ברוך פניםך.

*Baruch ata Adonai elohenu melech ha-olam boré p’ri hagafen.*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.**

Blessed are You, Lord our God, who has created us as men, who has endowed us with physical strength and spiritual grandeur and who has bestowed upon us our unique categories of understanding and the unique talents of our gender. Blessed are You, O Lord, who sanctifies our work and grants us our joy.

ברוך אתה יהוה מלך העולם, ברוך פניםך.

*Baruch atah Adonai elohenu melech ha-olam sheheheeyanu v’kiy’manu v’higi-anu laz’man hazeh.*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life and sustenance and permitted us to reach this season.**
Urhatz

Washing the Hands
The hands are washed without a berakha.

Karpas

Dipping Vegetables in Salt Water

ברוך אתה נב נאלה ומלך העולם בורא פרי
האדמה

Baruch atah Adonai eloheenu melech ha-olam boré p’ri ha-adamah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Yahatz

Breaking the Middle Matzah
The middle matzah is broken into two pieces;
the larger piece is hidden away for the Afikoman.
Maggid

Telling Our Story

Raising the matzot, the leader declares:

This is the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. The fear of poverty is the bread men eat each day of our lives. At present we are here, in this anxiety; next year may we be secure. At present we are slaves; next year may we be free men.

Slaves to Technology

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev once observed a man hurrying along the street, looking neither right nor left:

*Why are you rushing so? He asked him. I am after my livelihood, the man replied. And how do you know, continued the rabbi, that your livelihood is running on before you, so that you have to rush after it? Perhaps it is behind you, and all you need do to encounter it is to stand still.*

Machines that were designed to care for us force us to care for them. Timesaving gadgets ring and beep, and we jump to do their bidding. Now that bodies, possessions and ideas travel faster than ever, our accessories turn us into their appendages, and the old struggle between person and creation grows ever more intense.

Rabbi Dennis Ross, "God in Our Relationships"

*If you have a cell phone or pager take a moment to turn it off. How does it feel to be freed from this device? If you can't turn it off because of some obligation to always be reachable by your work, your spouse, your family when, if ever, do you feel free? Take a moment and share your reflections with another man at your table.*
The Four Questions

Why is this night different from all other nights?

? Why is it that because I am a Man I have to be the bread winner?

? Why was it so much easier to make friends when I was growing up?

? Why is it so important to me that I am still able to compete athletically at the same level I did when I was a teenager, even though my doctors and body tell me I can’t?

? Why is it that no matter how old I get, I don’t understand women?

The Four Questions from the Traditional Seder do not change from year to year, but each year we come with new questions. Take an index card from the stack on the table and write the question you brought to this Seder this year? Place the card in middle of the Seder Plate and during the meal use these cards for further discussion.
We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, not in control of our time or our labor, not masters of our destiny. And we are slaves even now to our modern day Pharaohs.

What enslaves you most as a man? What would need to change in your life to move you closer to freedom?

Avadim ha-yinu, ha-yinu,
Ata b'nè chorin, b'nè chorin.
Avadim ha-yinu, ata, ata b'nè chorin.
Avadim ha-yinu, ata, ata b'nè chorin, b'nè chorin.

בְּרוֹחַ הַפְּקֹדָה בְּרוֹחַ הָיָה.

**TO THINK ABOUT:**

“For this is the journey that men make, to find themselves. If they fail in this, it doesn’t matter much what else they find. Money, fame, position, many loves, revenge—all are of little consequence. And when the tickets are collected at the end of the ride they are tossed into a bin marked failure. But if a man happens to find himself—if he knows what he can be depended upon to do, the limits of his courage, the position from which he will no longer retreat ... the extent of his dedication ... then he has found a mansion which he can inhabit with dignity all the days of his life.”

James A. Michener, “The Fires of Spring”
The Torah speaks of four men: a wise man, a conflicted man, a simple man, and one who is not able to ask a question.

The wise man asks: "What is the meaning of my life? For what do I live?"

Write on a card what gives your life the most meaning and purpose. Collect the cards, shuffle them and redistribute them around the table and read the answer on each card.

The conflicted man asks: "What does this service to my aging parents mean to me? And what claim do my children have on me? And how do my responsibilities to my parents affect my responsibilities to my children?"

Write on a card what you have found to be the key to balancing the demands of being a son & being a father? Collect the cards, shuffle them and redistribute them around the table and read the answer on each card.

The simple man asks: "Why am I here? Why did I come to a Men’s Seder anyway, what am I hoping to get out of this experience?"

Write on a card why you came to this Seder and what you hope to get from it. Collect the cards, shuffle them and redistribute them around the table and read the answer on each card.
For the one who is unable to ask you must open up the subject to him, as it is written: “You shall tell your son on that day:...” What advice do you wish you had been given 20 or 30 years ago when you were just starting out as an adult man?

Write on the card the advice you wish you were given. Collect the cards, shuffle them and redistribute them around the table and read the answer on each card.

On Being A Friend:
Be first to greet your fellow man; invite him to your joyful occasions; call him by complimentary names; never give away his secrets; help him when he is in trouble; look after his interests when he is away; overlook his shortcomings and forgive him promptly; criticize him when he has done wrong; respect him always; do not deceive him; do not lie to him; pray for him and wish him happiness; attend to his burial if he dies.

Menorat ha-Maor

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, thought to bring most devastatingly upon men. Each gender has its plagues; these are ours.

Beat your drum or bang the table following the rhythm of the syllables of these plagues:

PROSTATE CANCER.
HEART DISEASE.
DIABETES.
WEIGHT GAIN.
HAIR LOSS.
JOB LOSS.
IMPOTENCE.
ARTHRITE.
SUBSTANCE ABUSE.
PREMATURE DEATH.
Now find a rhythm that is comfortable for you. Add to this list with additional Plagues that beset us as Men. When you have a plague to add to the list call it out.

**God has bestowed many blessings upon us.**
What are the blessings in your life?

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Take a card and make a list of the blessings you enjoy in life (these will not be shared). Place it in your pocket and refer to it throughout the days of Passover.

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When can we as men finally say,

**Dayyenu!! דייין**
When is enough really enough?
A Man’s Dayenu  ©Mike Stein 2007
Recording available at www.cantorstein.com

Verse:
What does it mean to have enough
When do we say dayenu
Why do we have to be so tough
Remove our hearts from the table
How can a job, a house and a car,
Give our lives meaning
Determine completely who we are
These things short-lived and fleeting

Chorus:
Dayenu dayenu being a man shouldn’t be so tough
Dayenu dayenu enough is enough!

Verse:
Why can’t we be content
With families to care for
Why do we think the things we own
Will make them love us more?
Top dog the boss a title
Look up and what do you see
That a dad a son a husband
Is all you need to be

Chorus:
Dayenu dayenu being a man shouldn’t be so tough
Dayenu dayenu enough is enough!

Verse:
When you are down to nothing
And think your worth is zero
Look in the eyes of the ones you love
They’re looking at a hero!

Chorus:
Dayenu dayenu being a man shouldn’t be so tough
Dayenu dayenu enough is enough!
**TO THINK ABOUT:**

"It's not that Jewish men are *wusses*. It's that our code of masculinity is simply different. We demonstrate our masculinity through love of ideas and words, an infatuation with argument and intellectual striving. Some people think that to be a man you have to know how to go it alone. Not Jewish men. We live like men in the midst of a community, showing responsibility and living lives of interconnection. Some people think that to be a man is to 'do what you gotta do.' Not Jewish men. We show that we are men through a strict adherence to a moral code. It means lifting ourselves higher than we ever thought possible. To be a Jewish man is a celebration, a celebration of Jewish difference. Jews pray differently, study differently, eat differently, live differently. And if we are men, then we are men differently as well.

Jeff Salkin, "In Search of My Brothers"

**Rabban Gamliel used to say:** Anyone who has not discussed these three things on Passover has not fulfilled his duty, namely:

פֶּסַח. מָצָאָה וּמַרְאוֹרָה

*Pesah, Matzah and Maror.*
On the way home, and in the days following, think about how to bring these questions to your Sederim.

**Pesah**

The Passover Sacrifice

Our ancestors ate the Passover Sacrifice during the period of the Temple.

What have you sacrificed to get where you are today? What are you willing to sacrifice to get where you want to go?

**Matzah**

Eating the Matzah

We eat the matzah because God redeemed our ancestors before their dough had time to rise.

What things are you forced to do quickly, like making matzah, because you don’t have enough time do them properly? What special things in our lives do we not have time for at all and wish we did?
Maror

Eating the Bitter Herb

We eat this bitter herb because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt.

What in our lives makes us bitter & angry?

בָּכֵל לְדוֹר וָדוֹר In every generation we are given new challenges as men.

What are the unique challenges of our generation?

Rahtzah

Wash the hands for the meal

Baruch ata Adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mits-votav v'tsivanu al n'tilat yada-yim.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.
Motzi Matzah

Baruch ata Adonai elohenu melech ha-olam hamotsi lechem min ha-aretz.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Shulhan Orekh

Use this time during the meal to return to the question you wrote earlier and are now on your seder plate. Ask the question of the table and have a discussion. It is not necessary for every man to share.

Tzafun

Partaking of the Afikoman
TO THINK ABOUT:
“Each lifetime is the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. For some, there are more pieces. For others, the puzzle is more difficult to assemble. But know this: you do not have within yourself all the pieces to your puzzle. Everyone carries with them at least one piece and probably many pieces to someone else’s puzzle. Sometimes they know it; sometimes they don’t know it. And when you present your piece, which is worthless to you, to another, whether you know it or not, whether they know it or not, you are a messenger from the Most High.”
Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, “Honey from the Rock”

Barekh
Grace After Meals

Leader:
Rabotai n’varēch.

Guests respond,

Then Seder leader continues:
Y’hi shēm Adonai m’vorach mē-atah v’ad olam.

All, then Leader repeats:
Bir-shut maranan v’rabotai, n’varēch [elohēnu] she-achal-nu mishelo.
Leader continues:

**Baruch [elohēnu] she-achal-nu mishelo uv-tuvo cha-yinu.**

All, then leader repeats:

**Baruch [elohēnu] she-achal-nu mishelo uv-tuvo cha-yinu.**

All:

**Baruch hu uvaruch sh’mo.**

נודת לכה לאלאחינו על שעתך שָׁלוֹם לָבָטְחָה, אָרָּז
המדת שותה ורבח, עזל שוחטאתן לאלאחינו
מארץ מצרים, פְּדוּתָּנוּ, משיח עבדים, עָזַל בְּרִיתָּנוּ
שָׁחְטָהֵנוּ בְּבָשָׂרִים, עָזַל חָוָרָה שָׁלְופְּדוּתָּנוּ, עָזַל דָּשָׁן
שָׁחְטָהֵנוּ עַל חִים וּפָרָס שַׁחֲטָהֵנוּ, עָזַל
אָכָלְתָהּ מַוָּעָה שָׁאָמַחְוּ וּמֶפְרֹזֶס אָוֹתְנוּ חָפִיד, בְּכָל
וֹזֵבָל עַל בָּכֶל שָׁאָמְחָה:

Nodeh l'cha Adonai E-loheinu al she-hinchalta la-avoteinu. Eretz chemda
tovah ur-chava, v'al she-hotzeitanu Adonai E-loheinu mei-eretz mitzrayim
uf-ditanu mibeit avadim, v'al brit'cha she-chatamta biv-sareinu, v'al
toratcha she-limid-tanu, v'al chukecha she-hodatanu, v'al chayim, chein
va-chesed she-chonantnu, v'al achilet mazon she-ata zan um-farneis
otanu tamid, b'chol yom uv'chol-eit uv'chol-shaah.

כֶּתֶנְתָה, יָאָכֵלְתָה וּשְׁבָעַת, וּבְרָכְתָּךְ אַתָּה נִי אֲלָלְתָּה עַל
הָאָרֶץ הַחֲבָרֶה עַשֵּׂר טַנְנָה לֶךְ. בּוֹרָךְ אַתָּה נִי, עַל הָאָרֶץ
וֹעַל חָפִיד:

Kakatuv v'achal-ta v'savata uv'erach-ta et-Adonai elohecha al ha-aretz
hatovah asher natan lach. Baruch ata Adonai, al ha-aretz v'al hamazon.

נִבְנָה יָרוֹשְׁלָם עַזְרֵךְ בֶּיתְךָ בִּמְדִי יָהוָה.
אֶתָּה נִי, בּוֹנֵה בְּרָחְמֶיךָ יָרוֹשְׁלָם. אַמָּה
UV'NÉ Y'rushala-yim ir hakodesh bim-hēra v'yamēnu. Baruch atah Adonai,
boneh b'rachamav Y'rushala-yim. Amēn.

ברָךְ אַתָּה נִי אֲלָלְתָּה מַלֶּךְ הָעָולָם, הָאֵל אֵבֹנָה,
מלכְּאֹבֲנָן, אָדִיּוֹן בּוֹרָאָתָן, הָוָאָלֵגֶנָה, צַעְרָא, קְדוֹשָׁו

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كدווים יעקב, רזעם רוחה ישראל. כמלתך חסお勧め,
והמתיב לכל, שבך כל יהו יהו הותיב, והוא
מלובב, הוא ויטיב לכל.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheenu melech ha-olam, ha-ël avinu mal-kēnu,
adirenu, bor-ēnu, go-alēnu, yots-rēnu, k'doshēnu, k'dosh ya-akov.
Ro-ēnu ro-ēh yis-ra-ēl. Hamelech hatov, v'hamētiv lakol, sheb'choł-yom
vayom hu hētiv, hu mētiv, hu yētiv lanu.

מגדיל יешועת מלכות, ונעשה חסד>Loading למשייחו كلדוד
הלורדים עד עולם: ונשאו שלום במרומם, והוא נשאה
שלום, ושלום על כל ישראל, ואמרו אמן:
Mag-dīl y'shuot mal-ko, v'oseh chesed lim-shicho, l'David ul'zar-o ad
olam. Oseh shalom bim-romav hu ya-aseh shalom alēnu v'al kol-Yis-ra-ēl,
v'imru amēn.

יי עיז לעמו יתי, יי זכרת את עמו בשלום:
Adonai oz l'amo yitēn, Adonai y'varēch et-amo vashalom.
Alternative Grace after Meals (English Version)

**Leader:**
Friends, let us give praise!

**All:**
May God’s name be praised now and forever more.

**Leader:**
May God’s name be praised now and for ever more. With consent of our friends, let us give praise to our God of whose goodness we have partaken.

**All:**
Praised be God of whose goodness we have partaken, forever and ever.

Praised be God and praised be God’s name.
Blessed are you Adonai, our God who rules the world and feeds the whole universe in unending goodness with grace, loving kindness and mercy, who provides bread and food for all who live in everlasting kindness.
And in God’s goodness so great never have we lacked, nor will we lack bread and food forever more. Great and good is God’s name for God gives and provides for all our needs, and does good to all and prepares food for all who have come to be God’s creatures great and small.
Blessed are You Adonai who feeds us all.
Uphold Jerusalem the holy city soon and in our day. We thank You, Adonai, who builds in mercy great Jerusalem. Amen.
May the all merciful send blessing to this our home and to this very table from which we have eaten.
May the all merciful send blessing to the state of Israel, the beginning of our people’s liberation.
May the all merciful bless all Jews who are oppressed and help us to bring them from bondage to freedom.
May the all merciful find us worthy to work for the Messianic Age, and lead a life of lasting value.
Grant indeed salvation for all who know God’s kindness, from David’s day to our own time forever more.
As peace reigns in the heavens high, may peace now come to our earth for us and for all Israel and let us say Amen.
Nirtzah

Acceptance

TO THINK ABOUT:
Sam Keen tells of being helped by an older man friend while going through a painful divorce. This man told him, “There are two questions a man must ask himself: The first is, “Where am I going?” The second is, ‘Who will go with me?’ If you ever get these questions in the wrong order you are in trouble!” Most of us get the order wrong.


Read Together
The Seder now concludes. Just as we were privileged to share with each other the issues we have in common,

Those which enslave us, and those which free us,

Those which demean us, and those which ennoble us,

So may we be granted acceptance of our lot in life - as Jews, as men, as Jewish men.

לְשָׁנָה חֲבָּאתָ בֵּי חֲרוֹנִי

_NEXT YEAR_  
_MAY WE BE FREE MEN!_

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Supplemental Exercises

A Life Worth Living:

Martin Luther King Jr. once taught that if an individual has not discovered something that he will die for, he hasn’t discovered what is worth living for.

According to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the most important decision a thinker makes is reflected in what he comes to consider the most important problem. There is only one really serious problem, and that is martyrdom. Is there anything worth dying for? We can only live the truth if we are willing to die for it.

Rabbi Heschel’s point is that our lives derive their ultimate value and sense of purpose not necessarily by what receives most of our time, but what commands our deepest commitment.

Questions for Discussion:
What would you risk your livelihood for?
What would you risk the security of your family for?
What would you risk your life for?

When Did You Realize You Were A Man?

Once when I was a teenager, I was swimming in the ocean, when a beautiful young mother and two children threw some stones in the water. 'Be careful not to hit that man' cried the mother. I looked about surprised - I hadn’t known anyone else was in the water. Then I realized - she meant me! It made my day!

-Steve Biddulph, "The Secret Life of Men"

So often we associate age or size with manhood. But we have seen both men in the bodies of boys and boys in the bodies of men. We know that there is much more to being a man than size (of anything).

Question for Discussion:
When did you first realize that you were no longer a child/adolescent and had become a man?
Who Are Your Angels?

And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I beg you, see whether it is well with your brothers, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying, What do you seek? And he said, I seek my brothers; tell me, I beg you, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They have departed from here; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brothers, and found them in Dothan. (Genesis 37)

In the language of Hollywood, the un-named man plays a bit part, but in the vocabulary of life his influence is far more than that of a bit player, he is the character upon which everything depends, "the right guy, in the right place, at the right time." Some commentators see the man as an angel sent into Joseph's life to make sure that he meets up with his brothers and fulfills his destiny of saving the Jewish people. They might be right if we understand an angel to be not a winged figure from heaven but a messenger sent into our lives to nudge us in the direction we need to go.

Questions for Discussion:
Have you ever experienced an 'angel'?
Have you ever been an 'angel' in the life of someone else?
Bibliography


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About The Authors:

Rabbi Dan Moskovitz is Associate Rabbi of Temple Judea, a Reform Congregation in Tarzana, California. As a teen, Dan was elected International President of AZA, the boy's division of the B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO). It was in this context that Dan first encountered the positive male mentors and powerful male friendships that would lead him later in life to the rabbinate and his work with Jewish men's issues. Dan graduated with honors from the University of Judaism in Los Angeles with a degree in Political Science. He also has two master's degrees, one in Education and the other in Hebrew Letters from the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. He has published numerous essays and sermons on issues relevant to Jewish men as well as more general subjects. He is also the founder and CEO of ShulTools, Inc. an industry leading information technology company serving Jewish professionals and organizations around the world. Dan is married to Sharon Mishler a screenwriter. They have a son, Judah.

Rabbi Perry Netter is Rabbi of Temple Beth Am in Los Angeles, California. Ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1982, Rabbi Netter has served congregations in Southern California his entire career, beginning at Temple Shaarei Tikvah in Arcadia, followed by Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel in Westwood, and finally joining the clergy of Temple Beth Am where he has been for the past 15 years. Rabbi Netter is also an Adjunct Lecturer in Bible and Rabbinics at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles. He is the author of the internationally acclaimed book, Divorce is a Mitzvah, as well as having appeared in the pages of MOMENT, Shma and The Jewish Spectator magazines with articles on themes in modern Jewish life. Rabbi Netter has appeared on radio and television as an authority on Judaism, including a consulting role and on-air commentator on the PBS series, The Kingdom of David. Married to Safi, herself a Jewish educator, Rabbi Netter is blessed to be the father of Elisheva, Moshe, Shira and Nadav.
For additional information, please contact the national office of MRJ:

Men of Reform Judaism (MRJ)

633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

1 800-765-6200
212-650-4100
212-650-4189 (fax)
MRJ@urj.org
www.menrj.org