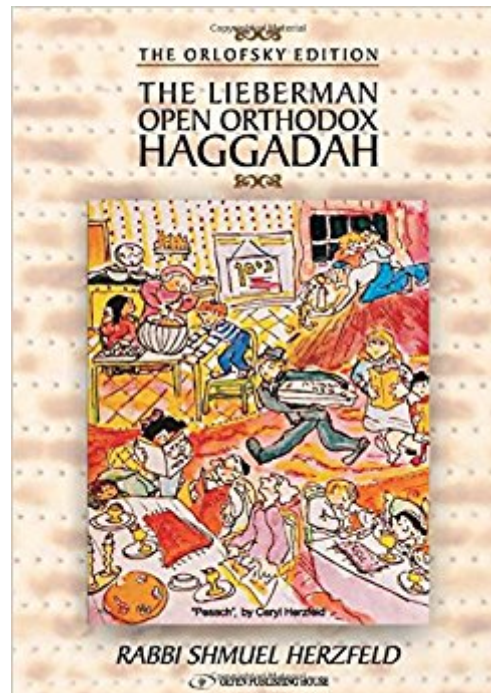




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The Lieberman Open Orthodox Haggadah



Synopsis

The Lieberman Open Orthodox Haggadah (the Orlofsky Edition) addresses some of the burning issues of our times through the lens of the rituals and texts of the Seder night. As we recognize that in every generation we are to seek liberation and freedom, this Haggadah demonstrates an activism that stems from rather than being stymied by our ancient traditions. Open Orthodoxy is a stream of Orthodoxy that combines a strict adherence to Jewish law with an openness and flexibility on certain contemporary issues. With contributions from prominent and original thinkers and an introduction to the term Open Orthodoxy from Rabbi Avi Weiss, this Haggadah discusses some of these cutting-edge concerns such as women as clergy within Orthodoxy (i.e., the Maharat phenomenon), the agunah crisis, and the interaction between Jews and Gentiles.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of this year's most compelling new entries. ...meaty commentary from leading Open Orthodox figures on everything. One of this year's most compelling new entries. --David Wilensky, JTA-Jewish Telegraphic Agency" (03/29/2015)"By all criteria the Lieberman Open Orthodox Haggadah by Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld released just two weeks before Passover is a smashing success Congregants have already bought every copy, yet historians should acquire a copy of this work to document the changes in American Jewry. This Hagadah offers a message for active people-doers who want to change the world. The haggadah reflects an ethos that educated laity should take an active role. And several synagogues in various parts of the US replaced their long time rabbis with newer YU rabbis who are more about inclusion, family activities, and social orientation.

A haggadah can only contain this much critique of the system if a significant number of homes did not already feel alienated. In short, this Haggadah oozes moxie and a direct appeal to those who like the Orthodox lifestyle but find a tension with what they perceive as the abuses of the system. All who are hungry for this moxie, let them come and eat. --Alan Brill, Kavannah blog
I highly recommend reading the haggadah. It's good for your midot or character building. I find the content meaningful and thought provoking. The haggada has many useful features, including the simple questions (great for opening discussions with children) in each section. --Birkat Chaverim Blog

Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld is the rabbi of Ohev Sholom The National Synagogue in Washington, D.C. Previously Rabbi Herzfeld was associate rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, where he was mentored by Rabbi Avi Weiss (the creator of the term Open Orthodoxy) in the principles of Open Orthodoxy. This is Rabbi Herzfeld's third book.

I was disappointed in this Haggadah. The essays are good, but could have used better editing. I was looking for text commentary, but got a manifesto instead. Though I agree with the stands taken, this just seemed like an easy way to get the author's religious world view out into the public sphere. Haggadot sell well, in general.

I read this Haggadah before Passover and Rabbi Herzfeld's insights and views are extremely enlightening. I also used it at both Seders, and it added a level of intellectual stimulation that is hard to come by. There are entries geared towards adults and children alike so the whole family can enjoy. Highly recommended!

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This is not a typical text with commentary. Instead, the commentary is mostly fairly long essays: some closely tied to the Haggadah, others less so. One of the first essays explains what Herzfeld means by "Open Orthodoxy"- a commitment to traditional halacha, but a willingness to resolve close calls in favor of innovation (especially on women's issues). Some other interesting points made in some of the essays: One of the more interesting essays discusses the Four Sons ritual. The essay notes that the Torah's apparent reference to the wicked son was (according to one legend) "a good prophecy." Why? Because even if we reject the views of the Wicked Son, "the mere fact that he is

studying Torah is a blessing."*Why does Avi Weiss (the creator of the "Open Orthodox" idea) favor female clergy? Weiss writes that there are, and should be, natural barriers between Orthodox rabbis and female congregants; for example, the general Orthodox view is that the rabbi shouldn't dance with her at a wedding or even study alone with her behind closed doors. Female clergy can do these things.*Should an adult drink wine during the Seder or is grape juice adequate? Another essay summarizes the wide diversity of views on the topic (assuming that no health issues prevent one from drinking wine). Some traditional rabbis argue that wine is special, because it alters the senses and thus symbolizes freedom. Others emphasize that taste is subjective, and that it is better to drink grape juice if you don't like wine.*Why does the Haggadah include language asking God to "pour out your wrath on the nations that know You not."? One essay points out that this prayer should be read in conjunction with more universalistic prayers that are said next. The first prayer emphasizes that Jews should "stand up for their own dignity" while the latter prayers emphasize our long-term goals of universal peace and brotherhood.

The haggadah is a book that Jews read during the Passover Seder meal to recall the exodus from Egypt and be inspired to develop a society today when all people, Jews and non-Jews, males and females, and people of all colors can be fully free. This book contains the entire Seder readings along with twenty-four short, enlightening discussions. Among them are an essay by Michel Martin, a non-Jewish veteran host of National Public Radio who writes about the "blessed" impact on her and her family of serving as the buyer of the hametz (the unleavened products) from Jews who attend the local synagogue, the neighborliness this created, and the subsequent result that "half a dozen men from the congregation came running to my aid" when she and her family needed help. Balinsky Friedman writes about the need for congregations to become sensitive to the pain of women who suffer because of infertility, and describes a healing ritual that some groups of women have used to help such women. Rabbi Weiss urges readers in his essay to be sensitive to all people. He notes that we need to be careful about past ideas; for respected rabbinical authorities sometimes made decisions based on incorrect ideas. The author of Mishnah Berurah, for example, thought that women could not understand the words of blessings. These are some of the many topics discussed and explained in this haggadah. Readers will delight in the ubiquitous explanations of the text, the provocative questions, and the discussions of topics such as how to prepare spiritually for Passover, the transformative nature of the four cups, and the meaning of such items as the afikoman.

Over the last few years I've kept my eyes open for haggadot that could help me enhance in a practical way the seder that I lead in my own home. This year I'm happy to have come across the Open Orthodox Haggadah by Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld. Rabbi Herzfeld endeavors to make the seder meaningful and appealing to all participants. Each section of the haggadah has questions to stimulate children and adults alike. The Hebrew text (with English translation) is the traditional one, but through the commentary Rabbi Herzfeld makes the text relevant to modern conditions and circumstances. The overarching commentary is his own (and is peppered with personal relevant experiences from his personal life and career as a pulpit rabbi), but internally it richly meshes together traditional interpretations of the sages of centuries past together with the insights of Modern Orthodox leaders. Noteworthy is that Rabbi Herzfeld gives a voice to underheard contemporary figures and the volume contains a number of short, self-contained contributions from the most prominent representatives of Open Orthodoxy. Finally, Rabbi Herzfeld goes out of his way to challenge us to make sure all segments and members of the community can feel at home and connect with the traditional seder.

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