

GIVE YOUR PASSOVER SEDER A GLOBAL FLAIR...

PASSOVER AROUND THE WORLD

A HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT FROM THE JEWISH LANGUAGE PROJECT



THE PASSOVER SEDER (ORDERED CEREMONY) AS TRADITIONALLY PRACTICED BY JEWS INCLUDES SEVERAL ANCIENT LANGUAGES – HEBREW (MOST OF THE HAGGADAH), ARAMAIC (HA LACHMA, CHAD GADYA), AND GREEK (AFIKOMAN). BUT JEWS AROUND THE WORLD HAVE INCORPORATED THEIR OWN LOCAL LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGES OF THEIR ANCESTORS INTO THEIR CELEBRATION OF THE HOLIDAY. INSIDE YOU WILL FIND PASSOVER PHRASES AND SONGS IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES.

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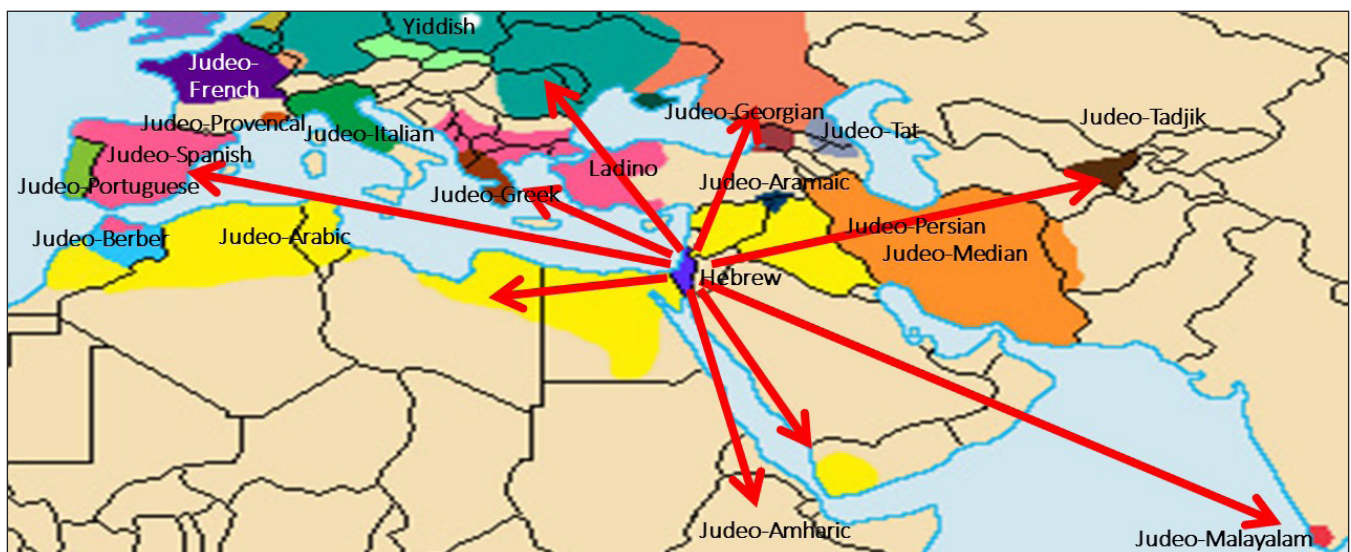
INTRODUCTION

The spring liberation holiday of Passover (Pesach – פסח) offers a rich illustration of the cultural diversity of the Jewish people. Wherever Jews have celebrated this holiday, they have incorporated songs, recitation, and conversation in their specific communal language(s), as well as food traditions influenced by the local cuisine and the community’s migration history. Most communities have used a printed haggadah featuring the original Hebrew and Aramaic text, often alongside translation into the vernacular.

JEWISH LANGUAGES

What are those vernaculars? Wherever Jews have lived around the world, they have spoken and written in languages distinct from their non-Jewish neighbors. Some of those language varieties might be considered dialects of the local non-Jewish language, and others are so different that the two communities cannot understand each other. For example, medieval Judeo-French and Judeo-Persian seem to have been quite similar to French and Persian, except that they were written in Hebrew letters and included

a few Hebrew words. Yiddish (primarily Germanic) was born in Germanic lands but was maintained after migrations in territories where non-Jews spoke Polish, Hungarian, and other non-Germanic languages. Similarly, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) originated in Spain, but it survived for centuries as a Hispanic language after its speakers were expelled and moved to Turkish, Greek, and Slavic lands. Most other Jewish languages are somewhere in the middle of this continuum: Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Greek, and Judeo-Italian, for example.



For more information on the many languages Jews have spoken and written throughout history, see:

Benor, Sarah Bunin, ed. 2002-2020. *Jewish Language Website*. www.jewishlanguages.org.

Hary, Benjamin, and Sarah Bunin Benor, eds. 2018. *Languages in Jewish Communities, Past and Present*. De Gruyter Mouton.

Kahn, Lily, and Aaron Rubin, eds. 2016. *Handbook of Jewish Languages*. Brill.

Spolsky, Bernard. 2014. *The Languages of the Jews: A Sociolinguistic History*. Cambridge.



How do you say “Happy Passover”?

Jews around the world have come up with diverse Passover greetings, often involving creative blends of Hebrew and local languages. Many of these phrases were originally written in Hebrew letters or other alphabets.

Judeo-French in Bordeaux, France:

Bonne fête
(good holiday)

Judeo-Tat/Juhuri in Quba, Azerbaijan:

Nisonushmu shor giro
(may your Passover [Nissan] pass happily)

Ladino in Izmir, Turkey:

Men: **Moadim lesimhá**
(times of happiness; Reply: Hagim uzmanim lesasón - holidays and times of joy);

Women: **Pesach alegre**
(happy Passover)

Judeo-Georgian in Kutaisi, Georgia:

Bednieri pesach-i
(happy Passover)

Judeo-Greek in Ioannina, Greece:

Kalo pesach/pascha
(good Passover)

Jewish Neo-Aramaic in Betanure, Iraq:

Edəd patire brixá
(blessed matzot festival)

Judeo-Italian in Rome, Italy:

Buon mongedde
(good holiday [moed])

Jewish Malayalam in Parur, India:

Nalle pesahə pernal
(happy Passover)

Western Yiddish in Alsace, France:

Bauet gut

(build well, likely a reference to rebuilding of the Temple because of the song Adir Hu)

Judeo-Provençal in Avignon, France:

Bon tsantou
(good holiday [yom-tov])

Judeo-Persian in Tehran, Iran:

Moedetun mubarak bashe
(have a happy holiday [moed])

Judeo-Arabic in Taroudant, Morocco:

Ikun ʕlik əl-ʕid m̄baṛk
(blessed holiday to you)

Yiddish in Kovno, Lithuania:

A zisn un koshern peysech
(a sweet and kosher Passover)

Jewish Amharic in Gondar, Ethiopia:

Melkam yeqita be'al
(fine holiday of unleavened bread)

For more on diverse Jewish Passover traditions, see:

Abadi, Jennifer Felicia. 2018. *Too Good to Passover: Sephardic & Judeo-Arabic Seder Menus and Memories from Africa, Asia and Europe*. Jennifer Abadi.

Lowenstein, Steven. 2000. *The Jewish Cultural Tapestry: International Jewish Folk Traditions*. Oxford.

Raphael, Chaim. 1993. *A Feast of History: The Drama of Passover through the Ages*. Reprint edition. Bnai Brith.





Phrases

Passover seder

chova (duty)

Judeo-Greek in Ioannina, Greece

fassaḥ (verb - conduct the seder)

Judeo-Arabic in Mossul, Iraq

praven/uprichtn dem sayder, saydern

(verb - conduct the seder)

Yiddish in Lvov/Lemberg, Ukraine

Kosher for Passover food and utensils

yontefdig

Western Yiddish in Amrichshausen, Germany

paysechdik

Yiddish in Warsaw, Poland

kasheria pesaxistvin

Judeo-Georgian in Tbilisi, Georgia

pesaholle sadhangle

Jewish Malayalam in Chennamangalam, India

altavaqa almufatra

(kashered room for preparing/
storing Passover grains)

Judeo-Arabic in Sana'a, Yemen

Proverbs

'ez moshe, gazele mnoshe

(Holiday of Moses, He provides Himself

[God helps needy people celebrate Passover])

Jewish Neo-Aramaic in Zakho, Iraq

Matses un vayn muz zayn,

shmalts un eyer – nit zeyer

(matzah and wine are a must,

chicken fat and eggs – not so much)

Yiddish in Vilna, Lithuania

Wordplay

In Judeo-Italian, **shefok** can mean “to vomit,” based on shefoch chamatcha (pour out your wrath) from the seder. In Ladino the high costs of the holiday are summarized by interpreting Pésah as an acronym for **Parás sin hazbón** – Money [expenditures] without [keeping an] account.

Some Jews in Arabic-speaking lands avoid eating chickpeas on Passover, even though they eat other kitniyot. One explanation is that **hummus** (chickpea) and **hametz** (leavened products forbidden on Passover) sound very similar in Judeo-Arabic.

Matzah

Jews in most communities use variants of מצה, but here are some additional names for Passover unleavened bread:

qoqol

Judeo-Tat/Juhuri in Derbent, Dagestan

coudolo

Judeo-Provençal in Comtat Venaissin, France

sensenya

Ladino in Salonika, Greece

jərduqayi

Judeo-Arabic in Baghdad, Iraq

faṭīr

Judeo-Arabic in Cairo, Egypt

mašummōr

Judeo-Arabic in Ḥugariyyah, Yemen

(The evening of) searching for and getting rid of chametz

di nacht tsi chumets batlen

(the night to void chametz)

boydek chumets zaan

(search for chametz [to be])

Yiddish in Bialystok, Poland

dechamezzar

(de-chametz - infinitive verb)

Haketia (Judeo-Spanish) in Tetuan, Morocco

des·hamesar (de-chametz)

badkamiento (search [badkar]-ing)

día de kal hamirá

(day of kal chamira - formula
renouncing possession of chametz)

Ladino in Salonica, Greece

lilet qto' el-ḥamiṣ

(night of stopping the chametz)

Judeo-Arabic in Bengazi, Libya

bdikt ḥamiṣ

(searching for chametz – also used by women
as a curse, meaning ‘may [the person being
cursed] become extinct’)

Judeo-Arabic in Ksar Es-Souk, Morocco



Charoset

The sweet mixture representing mortar and freedom



Just as charoset looks and tastes different in various Jewish cultures, it also sounds different:

Ladino in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia:
harosi

Yiddish in Lublin, Poland:
chroyses

Western Yiddish in Amsterdam, Netherlands:
charouses

Judeo-Greek in Ioannina, Greece:
charoeth, charosef

Judeo-Italian in Venice, Italy:
haroset

Judeo-French in Bayonne, France:
rharoche

Judeo-Persian in Tehran, Iran:
halegh

Judeo-Median in Hamadan, Iran:
haliká

Jewish Neo-Aramaic in Betanure, Iraq:
həlliq

Judeo-Arabic in Baghdad, Iraq:
hīlq, silan, shira

Judeo-Arabic in Tripoli, Libya:
lahliq

Judeo-Arabic in Sana'a, Yemen:
dukkih

- 1** Libyan lahliq, made with dates, pecans, almonds, pomegranate juice, raisins, apples, cinnamon, cumin, and coriander. Other Libyan lahliq recipes include allspice, nutmeg, ginger, and vinegar.
- 2** Ashkenazi charoset as commonly made in the United States today – with apples, walnuts, wine, cinnamon, and sugar. Other recipes include raisins.
- 3** Italian haroset with apples, pears, dates, raisins, prunes, pine nuts, honey, ginger, and cinnamon. Other Italian recipes include almonds, dates, bananas, oranges, walnuts, chestnuts, and cloves.

You can find delicious recipes for charoset and other Passover foods at jewishlanguages.org.

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Introductions to the Exodus story in Judeo-Arabic

Judeo-Arabic from Morocco Hagda Qsem Allah - Splitting the Sea

Moroccan Jews recite a passage in Judeo-Arabic at the Yaḥaş section of the Seder, when the leader takes the middle of three maşşot and breaks it into two pieces, demonstrating how God split the sea:

Hagda qsem Allah libhar, 'ala tnas letreq
hen kherjou jdoudna min masar
'Ala yid sidna unbina Mousa bin 'Amram
Hen fikkhoum ughatehoum, milkhdema se'iba alhouriya.
Hagda yifikkna haQadosh Baroukh Hou wenomar Amen

This is how God split the sea into twelve paths when our forefathers were taken out of Egypt by our master and prophet Moshe, son of Amram, peace be upon him. Just as at that time God saved and redeemed them from slavery to freedom, may the Holy One Blessed be He liberate us, our children, and the children of our children, Amen may it be God's will.

Judeo-Arabic from Aleppo, Syria Mish-arotam - Theatrical Exchange

Many Sephardi and Mizrahi communities include this tradition near the beginning of the Maggid section of the seder.

After the leader breaks the middle maşşa, he places the larger piece (the afikomen) in a napkin. One participant holds this in his right hand over his left shoulder and recites:

Mish-arotam şerourot besimlotam 'al shikhmam. Ubene yisra-el 'asu kidbar Moshe.
...their remaining possessions tied up in their bags on their shoulders. And the children of Israel did as Moses commanded (Exodus 12:34-35).

The seder participants then ask the person holding the maşşa

Min jayye? – Where are you coming from?

The individual holding the maşşa replies:

Mimmişrayim – From Egypt

The seder participants then ask:

Lawen rayyih? – Where are you going?

The individual holding the maşşa replies:

Lirushalayim (be'ezrat ha-el) – To Jerusalem (some say: with God's help)

The maşşa is then passed to the next oldest, who repeats the ceremony. This continues until everyone at the table has participated.

Judeo-Arabic from Yemen Ma Chabar - A Women's Seder Summary

Women in Yemen did not have the Hebrew education to understand the haggadah, so they recited a summary in Judeo-Arabic:

What makes this night different from all nights? Our elders and forefathers left Egypt, the house of slavery. What did they do there? They mixed the straw with bricks and the bricks with straw. For whom? For Pharaoh, the absolute evil man, whose head is like a monster, whose mouth is like a furnace. And God brought upon the Egyptians: blood, frogs, locusts, lice, beasts, cattle disease, boils, hail, darkness, and the slaying of the firstborn. Even a wrinkled old woman, who had an idol made of dough – the dog came in and ate it, and she cried that night. And there was a great outcry in Egypt to fulfill the verse that says, "There was no house without someone dead." And God saved them with a mighty hand and outstretched arm and great judgments, signs, and wonders, through our leader, Moses, may he rest in peace. And that is the answer.

Four Questions

YIDDISH

Far vos iz di nacht fun peysech andersh fun ale necht fun a gants yor?

- 1 Far vos ale necht fun a gants yor, az mir viln, esn mir chomets, un az mir viln, esn mir matse, ober di nacht fun peysech esn mir nor matse?
- 2 Far vos ale necht fun a gants yor, az mir viln, esn mir bitere grinsn, un az mir viln esn mir zise grinsn, ober di nacht fun peysech esn mir nor bitere grinsn?
- 3 Far vos ale necht fun a gants yor, tunken mir eyn mol oych nit ayn, ober di nacht fun peysech tunken mir ayn tsvey mol – eyn mol grins in zalts vaser, un dos tsveyte mol chreyn in charoyses?
- 4 Far vos ale necht fun a gants yor az mir viln esn mir zitsndik, un az mir viln esn mir ongeshpart, ober di nacht fun peysech esn mir ale ongeshpart?

JUDEO-GREEK

Ti diapher tout ē nichta ap oles ts-allis nichtis?

- 1 Oles ts-allis nichtis trōmi chamets ē matsa? Ki mon tout t'nichta mono matsa.
- 2 Oles ts-allis nichtis trōmi ola ta chorta? Ki mon tout t'nichta trōmi pikra chorta.
- 3 Oles ts-allis nichtis den boutami kamia phora? Ki mon tout t'nichta boutami dio phores.
- 4 Oles ts-allis nichtis trōmi kathismen'? Ki mon tout oloi akoumpismen.

For more on the Four Questions in multiple languages, see:

Kurshan, Ilana. 2008. *Why Is This Night Different from All Other Nights?: "The Four Questions" Around the World*. Schocken.

Spiegel, Murray, and Rickey Stein. 2013. *300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions*. Second edition. Spiegel-Stein Publishing. www.WhyIsThisNight.com.

TUNISIAN JUDEO-ARABIC

Aš əl-maʿna əl-līla hādi mən kull əl-lyāli.

- 1 əldi fi ġmīʿ əl-lyāli lēs iħna nġetsu ħtta maṛra wāħda, u-l-līla hādi zōġ maṛṛāt.
- 2 əldi fi ġmīʿ əl-lyāli iħna nāklu xmīr aw fṭīr, u-l-līla hādi kulhu fṭīr.
- 3 əldi fi ġmīʿ əl-lyāli iħna nāklu baqiyyat xḍāra, u-l-līla hādi mrār.
- 4 əldi fi ġmīʿ əl-lyāli iħna nāklu u-nəšrbu swa qāʿdin u-swa məttəkiyyin, u-l-līla hādi kulna məttəkiyyin.

JUDEO-PERSIAN/FARSI

Cherah een shab ba'ah shab hayeh deegar fargh dareht?

- 1 Dar shab hayeh deegar mah ya na'an ya fateer meekhoreem; valley em shab faghat fateer meekhoreem.
- 2 Dar shab hayeh deegar hameh jour sabzie meekhoreem; valley em shab faghat sabzayeh talkh meekhoreem.
- 3 Dar shab hayeh deegar mah sabzeeh-ra dar cirqueh hatah yek bar haleem nemizaneem; valley em shab dough bar meezaneem.
- 4 Dar shab hayeh deegar mah ghazayeh-mon rah hajourey khosteem meekhoreem; valley em shab kaj meesheeneem vah meekhoreem.

LADINO/JUDEO-SPANISH

Kien supiense i entendiense?

[Who knows and understands?]

Alavar al Dyo kreyense.

[Praise God the Creator.]

Kwalo son los TREDJE?

[What are THIRTEEN?]

TREDJE anyos de bar mizva.

[THIRTEEN years for bar mitzvah.]

DODJE trivos de Israel.

[TWELVE tribes of Israel.]

ONZE ermanos sin Yosef.

[ELEVEN brothers without Joseph.]

DYEZ los mandamientos de la ley.

[TEN commandments.]

MUEVE mezes de la prinyada.

[NINE months of pregnancy.]

OCHO dias de la milá.

[EIGHT days for circumcision.]

SIETE dias kon shabat.

[SEVEN days with Shabbat.]

SEISH dias de la semana.

[SIX days of the week.]

SINKO livros de la ley.

[FIVE books of the law.]

KWATRO madres de Israel.

[FOUR mothers of Israel.]

TRES nuestros padres son.

[THREE are our fathers.]

DOS Moshe y Aron.

[TWO Moses and Aaron.]

UNO es el kriador

[ONE is the Creator,]

Baruh u uvaruh shemo

[Blessed be He and his name.]

BUKHARIAN/JUDEO-TAJIK (CENTRAL ASIA)

Sezdakhum kie medonad?

[Who knows the thirteenth?]

Sezdakhum man' medonam!

[I know the thirteenth.]

Sezdakhum: sezdah khislatcho.

[Thirteenth are the 13 attributes (of God).]

Duvozdakhum: duvozdah shivtocho.

[Twelfth are the 12 tribes.]

Yozdakhum: yozdah sitoracho.

[Eleventh are the 11 stars (in Joseph's dream).]

Dakhumin: dakh sukhanon.

[Tenth are the 10 utterances (Commandments).]

Nokhumin: noch mochie zanon.

[Ninth are the nine months of pregnancy.]

Khashtumin: khasht rouzi millo.

[Eighth are the eight days of circumcision.]

Khaftumin: khaft rouzi khafta.

[Seventh are the seven days of the week.]

Shishtumin: shash sidrey mishno.

[Sixth are the six orders of the Mishnah.]

Panjumin: panj sifrey Toro.

[Fifth are the five books of Torah.]

Chorumin: chor' modaron.

[Fourth are the four Matriarchs.]

Seyumin: se'e padaron.

[Third are the three Patriarchs.]

Duyumin: du'u lavchie gavkhar.

[Second are the two Tablets of the Covenant.]

Yakumin: Khudoyi pabun olamin.

[First is God, Lord of Heaven and Earth.]

Echad Mi Yodea? Who Knows One?

Chad Gadya

One Little Goat

Judeo-Georgian

Da mobrdzanda akadom baruxu [And there came the Holy One Blessed Is He]

Da dakla malax amaveti [killing the angel of death]

Rom dakla shoxet [that had killed the slaughterer]

Rom dakla xari [that had killed the bull]

Rom dalia tskali [that had drunk the water]

Rom chaakro cecxli [that had extinguished the fire]

Rom datsva joxi [that had burned the stick]

Rom cema dzagli [that had beaten the dog]

Rom ukbina katas [that had bitten the cat]

Rom shechama tikani [that had eaten the goatling]

Rom ikida mamachemma or abazad [bought by my daddy for two abazi]

Erti tikani, erti tikani! [one goatling, one goatling]



Judeo-Italian in Rome

Benne il kadosh baruch u [Then came the Holy One Blessed Is He]

Che shachtò il malach amaved [who slaughtered the angel of death]

Che shachtò il shochettè [who slaughtered the slaughterer]

Che shachtò il bove [who slaughtered the ox]

Che si bebbe l'acqua [that drank the water]

Che smorzò il foco [that put out the fire]

Che abbruciò il bastone [that burned the stick]

Che bastonò il cane [that beat the dog]

Che mozzicò la gatta [that bit the cat]

Che si mangiò il capretto [that ate the kid]

Che comprò mio padre [that my father bought]

Per due scude. [for two coins.]

Ah lu capre'. Ah lu capre'. [Oh the kid. Oh the kid.]

JEWISH LANGUAGES TODAY

How are longstanding Jewish languages faring today? Although most descendants of Yiddish speakers no longer speak the language, Yiddish is thriving in Hasidic communities, especially in the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, and Israel. Two other languages are still spoken by some young people in select communities: Judeo-Tajik/Bukharian (Bukharan Jews of Uzbekistan and other parts of Central Asia) and Judeo-Tat/Juhuri (Mountain Jews of Dagestan and Azerbaijan), but these languages are also threatened. Most other longstanding Jewish languages are endangered, because the only remaining speakers are elderly. Due to the Holocaust and various expulsions and migrations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, most of the people who spoke these longstanding languages could not or did not pass their language on to their children. Some highly endangered languages include Jewish Neo-Aramaic (Kurdish territories of Iraq and neighboring countries), Jewish Malayalam (Southern India), and various Median languages from Iran, like Judeo-Shirazi and Judeo-Hamadani.

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

As many Jewish languages become endangered, small groups of Jews are expressing renewed interest in them. Jews gather to celebrate Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and Judeo-Italian, and they use them in artistic work, especially music, theater, and film. This “postvernacular” activity, however, will not reverse the trends toward endangerment.

NEW JEWISH LANGUAGES

At the same time, new Jewish languages are developing, such as Jewish English and Jewish Latin American Spanish. These languages tend to be similar to the local non-Jewish language, and most are written in the Latin alphabet, rather than Hebrew letters like many longstanding Jewish languages. But they continue to draw from multiple linguistic sources. For example, Swedish Jews incorporate Hebrew, Yiddish, and Western Yiddish into their Swedish, saying *peisachdike* (kosher for Passover) and *Jag vill battla chomez* (I want to get rid of chametz). In France, Algerian-origin Jews call *matzah matsa* or *galette*, and Moroccan-origin Jews say, “*Bibilu, ça porte bonheur!*” (In haste, that brings honor; referencing the “*Bibhilu*” piyyut they recite as they wave the seder plate over guests’ heads before *Ha Lahma*). Jews in Hungary call “*matzah ball soup*” *matsesgombotslevesh* and “*kosher for Passover*” *kosher pesachra*. Contemporary Jews are continuing the centuries-old tradition of creatively infusing the local spoken language with the Hebrew of sacred texts and languages reflecting Jews’ historical migrations. How do these linguistic trends play out in your family?

ABOUT THE JEWISH LANGUAGE PROJECT

The Jewish Language Project promotes research on, awareness about, and engagement surrounding the many languages spoken and written by Jews throughout history and around the world. This initiative was launched in 2020, building on and encompassing several projects led by Professor Sarah Bunin Benor. The Jewish Language Project is an initiative of the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). This haggadah supplement was compiled by Sarah Bunin Benor, with assistance from Elaine Miller, and designed by Daria Hoffman. Many scholars contributed information.

