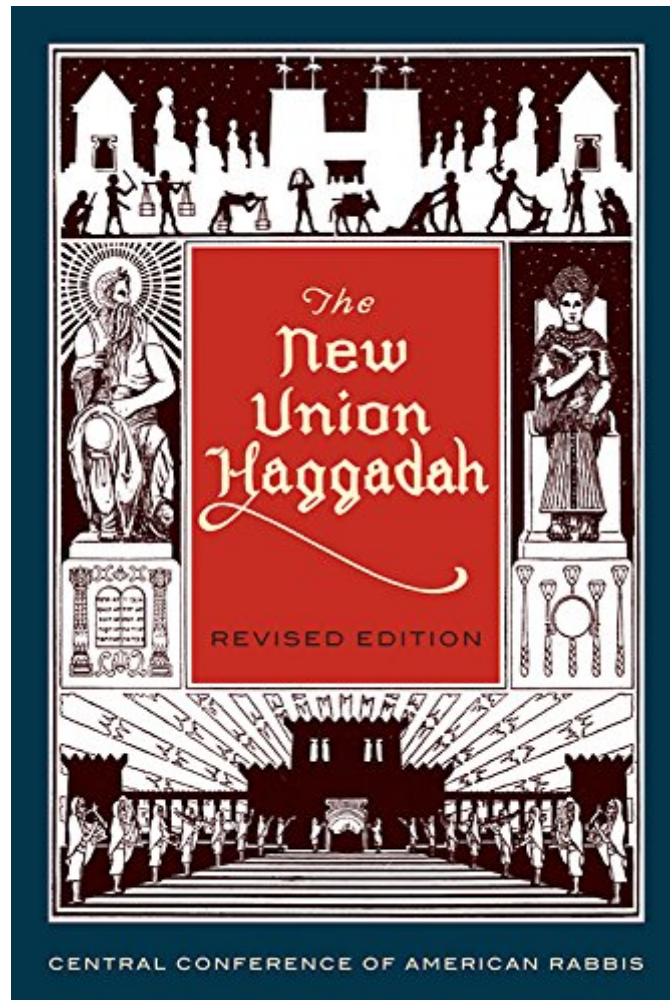


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# The New Union Haggadah: Revised Edition



## Synopsis

Blends the best of the old and the new! This thoughtful update of the beloved 1923 Haggadah preserves the elegance and beauty of the original version while making it relevant to 21st Century families.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've been excited about the prospect of a new Reform Haggadah for some time, so I was bound to pick this up in time for the Passover season. The New Union Haggadah is the first official Reform order for the Passover meal in several years, and as such, it hits the saturated market with all the expected fanfare. Haggadot are as plenty and diverse as there are people who use them, and if you can't find one you like, you can always make your own. So what makes this particular Haggadah worth a purchase? Let's dive in and take a look-see. Just the facts, please: This Haggadah is designed for contemplation of, and use during, the Passover season. In addition to a complete order for the Passover meal (called a Seder), the volume also includes essays designed to explore the festival's key themes from a Reform Jewish perspective. The text of the meal itself was crafted in part by leadership from the Reform movement's "Classical" sub-set, the Society for Classical

Reform Judaism, which - among other things - advocates praying in a language easily comprehended by the individual (usually English). As a result, this book is primarily an English one, with occasional Hebrew blessings and prayers at key moments throughout.

**Presentation:** While the measurements of the book are compact (it's small, and easily held in the hand), the glossy hardcover finish is attractive and elegant. Inside, texts are often accented by religious imagery in woodcut or stained glass -style artwork. I found the print is large enough to be accessible, though your own mileage may vary based on your particular visual strength. The order of the meal is easy to follow, with readings laid out in such a way as to make it simple for every participant to decide which sections they wish to read. Customizing an evening Seder can therefore be done with little fuss.

**Content:** This is a Reform Haggadah that explicitly celebrates the history and heritage of the Classical Reform way of life. The English readings, which constitute the majority of the book, are stately and (I say this with all due respect) almost Catholic Mass-like in their formality. If you've ever prayed with an older Reform prayerbook, like *Gates of Prayer*, you have a sense of what I mean. That's not to say there is an over-reliance on King James-style "thees" and "thous," only that the Haggadah may feel a bit more somber than some of the texts available today. Furthermore, this formality is actually a principle draw of this particular text, as it calls attention to the kind of elegant language that once defined all expressions of Reform worship. As for the essays - they offer quick, thoughtful reads by Reform scholars, making the Haggadah an excellent tool for Passover teaching, in addition to worship. While none of the essays is particularly Earth-shattering in its insight, all present themselves concisely and intelligently, with relevant themes to contemplate before and after your Seder. Lastly, while the book is decidedly Reform, it would make an excellent tool for an interfaith or first-time Seder, without sacrificing much (if any) of what all Jewish movements share during the Passover season. In other words, even those who don't "tow the party line" toward Reform may find something to love here.

**Conclusion:** The New Union Haggadah isn't going to be for everyone. Those with an aversion to English-heavy prayer will find the large absence of Hebrew to be distracting, and those who are averse to formal language will likely turn to another Haggadah for something a bit friendlier. However, the book offers much to love, even for those who don't see themselves as Reform Jews. The presentation is simple and classy, the book itself is durable and will likely last a long time, and as a Reform work, it does wonders in speaking to the vibrancy of the Classical Reform philosophy. No major qualms here; this is one for your library.

Beautiful text, but I wish the illustrations were more colorful and the book was larger. The previous (1974) version appealed more to children. However, the text is better than the half dozen

alternatives I reviewed and it is gender neutral which I like.

Good

Very nice.

Uninspiring, drastically abridged, watered down, and devoid of meaningful content.

This haggadah is beautiful in every way. Its message is the hope of peace FOR ALL PEOPLE. A compact hardcover volume (easy for cleanup and durability), its colorful images uplift and inspire. The language is new, but the meaning is timeless. It is primarily in English, accessible for all who might attend the seder. But its intention is undeniably Jewish: with the universal promise of oneness of all humanity. The volume also contains excellent essays on the history of Passover and its celebration that will enlighten the mind of the seder leader, and all who choose to read them. The seder is very user-friendly: setting out a template for an evening that can be brief, but leaving plenty of room for elaboration, conversation, and questions for those planning to spend the night. A wonderful resource to teach families (with great hymns included), this haggadah's additional strength is that it is well-suited for adults, whether knowledgeable about Judaism or new to the seder. In its brevity, the New Union Haggadah won't go over the heads of some nor will it leave Passover veterans bored and underwhelmed. This is the haggadah my family will be using for many years to come.

I do not own this haggadah but it was used at the Passover seder I recently attended. Besides adding new items to the seder plate, changing the English translation so it didn't reflect the Hebrew, the editor also wrote an essay at the end denying the truth that the Exodus ever happened and strongly implied that the stories of the Torah were nice fictitious allegory we can learn from. If all of Judaism were to teach what is in here to their children Judaism would cease to exist in one to two generations

I love this Haggadah more than any other have used over the years. As another reviewer mentioned, the book itself is elegant in its feel and presentation. The woodcuts and full color stained glass images are beautiful and add interest. The page layout makes the text easy to read. You aren't overwhelmed with explanations and commentaries, yet nothing for me is compromised. Quite

the contrary, the essence of the Classical Reform universal message of Passover is powerfully conveyed in language that is moving and accessible to all. Non-Jewish guests and family members can easily follow and participate in the Seder that is primarily in English. The Hebrew passages include transliterations and well as translations, so no one feels lost or left out. I also appreciate the updated text. It is not only gender neutral, but also includes new rituals that have become standard at many family Seders. One that I particularly appreciate is the inclusion of the orange on the Seder plate. It represents the equality of women in spiritual leadership roles, including rabbis, and the celebration of diversity and inclusion of everyone sitting around our table. I've used this Haggadah since it was first published. I appreciate it more and more each year.

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