

# A TALKING SEDER

Leading a Meaningful Seder Conversation about  
Anti-Semitism and Violent Extremism in the World Today

## INTRODUCTION

*The following discussion guide has been prepared as a supplement to your seder to encourage an open and participatory conversation. Following this introduction, there is a short text with corresponding questions to complement each glass of wine. Freely adapt to meet your needs. With all your guests at the table, please read the following:*

Welcome to our Passover seder.

Tonight, we're going to celebrate the Jewish people's journey from slavery to freedom. Telling the Passover story, the *maggid*, is the heart of the seder. The word *maggid* comes from the same Hebrew root as the word *Haggadah*. It means "to tell."

Often, in life, silence is encouraged. There are many aphorisms: "Silence is golden," "If you've got nothing nice to say, say nothing at all." Will Rogers once said, "Never miss a good chance to shut up!"

We're not going to be silent tonight. In the grand Jewish tradition, we're going to *kibitz*. After every glass of wine we share, four in all, each of us will have the opportunity to speak... candidly and without fear of persecution. Political correctness is not required.

For tonight, at this table, all of us are free to openly express our beliefs.

**As a warm-up, introduce yourself and tell us what you think of this talking seder idea.**

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A Talking Seder was created by Six Million Strong. We wish you a lively, joyous and meaningful seder. We'd love to continue the conversation. Find us on Twitter: [@sixmilstrong](https://twitter.com/sixmilstrong), our Facebook page: [facebook.com/sixmillionstrong](https://facebook.com/sixmillionstrong), or by sending an email: [info@sixmillionstrong.org](mailto:info@sixmillionstrong.org).

## FIRST GLASS

We're about to embark on an incredible narrative journey, the telling of the Passover story. The Jewish people have been retelling this story for thousands of years.

Why? What makes this story so powerful?

One reason, perhaps, is that it is a story that demands participation.

With the very first words that begin the Passover story, something remarkable happens. The Haggadah announces this isn't a history lesson.

"Now we are slaves. Next year we will be free."

We're asked to look at this narrative *not* as something that happened to someone else long ago.

Instead, we're asked to place ourselves in the role of the enslaved, yearning for freedom.

**Have you ever felt oppressed because of your religious identity or beliefs?**

**Have you ever felt oppressed because of some other aspect of who you are or what you believe?**

With these questions, and those that follow later, let's go around the table, each taking up to a few minutes to share our thoughts.

## **SECOND GLASS**

Near the beginning of the Passover story, we raised our glass of wine and said, “For more than once have they risen against us to destroy us; in every generation they rise against us and seek our destruction.”

From the destruction of the two Temples to the Crusades and the Inquisition, from forced conversions, expulsions and pogroms to the Holocaust, every generation of Jews has experienced persecution.

**Looking back on the past year, can you recall an incident of anti-Semitism or violent extremism that impacted you?**

**Have you ever been concerned about living openly as a Jew in the United States? Why or why not?**

**Have recent events made you more concerned about Jewish people living in Europe?**

## THIRD GLASS

The central figure in the story of the Jewish people's redemption is almost absent from the Haggadah narrative: Moses. In the Torah story of the Exodus, Moses looms large, wielding his staff to summon God's miracles.

Yet, at the start of his call to action, Moses is a reluctant leader at best. Painfully uncomfortable with speaking, he's terrified that Pharaoh won't hear his plea. These qualities make Moses eminently human. And relatable!

So, why is Moses absent from the story tonight?

One reason, perhaps, is to bring home the point that Moses is no longer here to lead us today. Each of us is tasked to be the Moses of our own lives. We must face our own fears and confront our own weaknesses; we must transform ourselves in order to stand up to injustice around us.

**Can you recall a time when you spoke up, even when it was difficult? What obstacles did you face? How did you feel afterwards?**

**Can you recall a time when you wanted to speak up, but remained silent? How did you feel afterwards?**

## **FOURTH GLASS**

Since the days of Egypt, and time and again since, Jews have established communities within other nations, made valuable contributions and flourished. The Passover story offers little as to why we were persecuted.

“And they did us evil, those Egyptians, and they tortured us, saddling us with punishing work.”

It's believed the Jewish people remained slaves in Egypt for over two hundred years. While the cause of oppression remains a mystery, the secret to redemption is at the Haggadah's very core.

“And we cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard our voices.”

Freedom is only possible when we summon our courage, confront our fears, and speak up to intolerance and oppression.

**Do you feel adequately prepared to speak up against anti-Semitism or combat violent extremism?**

**Are individual Jews today better prepared than European Jews were in the 1930s? Why or why not?**

# NEXT YEAR, LET ALL OF US BE FREE

Until then, let's keep speaking up.

We hope your Talking Seder was lively, joyous and meaningful. We'd love to hear your feedback, and to continue the conversation online or by email.

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## ABOUT SIX MILLION STRONG

A Talking Seder was created by Six Million Strong, a non-profit grassroots community dedicated to protecting the safety of all Jewish people, and their position as a well-integrated part of our society.

Our mission is to inform, engage and mobilize new audiences *to take actions* and raise funds that support programs *that directly empower individuals* to combat anti-Semitism and violent extremism around the world.

Together, using the power of crowdsourcing and the internet, we're going to build an educated global community. We're going to make the world safer for each other and for our children. We're going to let the world know we'll never live in fear or hiding again.

We need your help!

Although we're not accepting donations as we seek 501(c)(3) status, we welcome your support. Follow us on Twitter: [@sixmilstrong](https://twitter.com/sixmilstrong), like us on Facebook: [facebook.com/sixmillionstrong](https://facebook.com/sixmillionstrong), and share this guide with your friends. Want to get involved? Send us an email: [info@sixmillionstrong.org](mailto:info@sixmillionstrong.org), and we'll get in touch.

