

# How To "Be" A Hero Of The Pesach Story

A Moishe House resource for community leaders

Source Sheet by Yulia Bezrukova and Jessica Herrmann



"While historical memory plays a role in virtually every Jewish holiday, the holiday of Pesach – more than any other – is the holiday of remembrance. Going a step beyond the Torah's insistence that the Jewish people remember the experience of slavery, the Haggadah demands that *"in each generation, each person is obligated to see themselves [lirot et atzmo] as though they personally came forth from Egypt.* (Pesachim 116b - בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִילוֹ הוּא יָצָא ( מִמִּצְרַיִם )

For the Haggadah, it is not enough simply to remember or even to retell the story of the exodus from Egypt. Rather, one must also project oneself into the story in order personally to experience the move from slavery to liberation." - from My Jewish Learning article "I Was Redeemed From Egypt"

## Let's dive in the meaning of the mitzva "lirot et atzmo":

1. Connecting With The Pesach Story
2. Seeing Yourself As A Pesach Story Hero
3. Showing, Not Seeing: Becoming Pesach story hero through Tikkun Olam



From 14th century Pesach Haggadah from Sarajevo and to modern days "Marvelous Mrs. Maisel Haggadah" we see how relating the story of Pesach to people's lives is essential to the holiday.

## Connecting With The Pesach Story

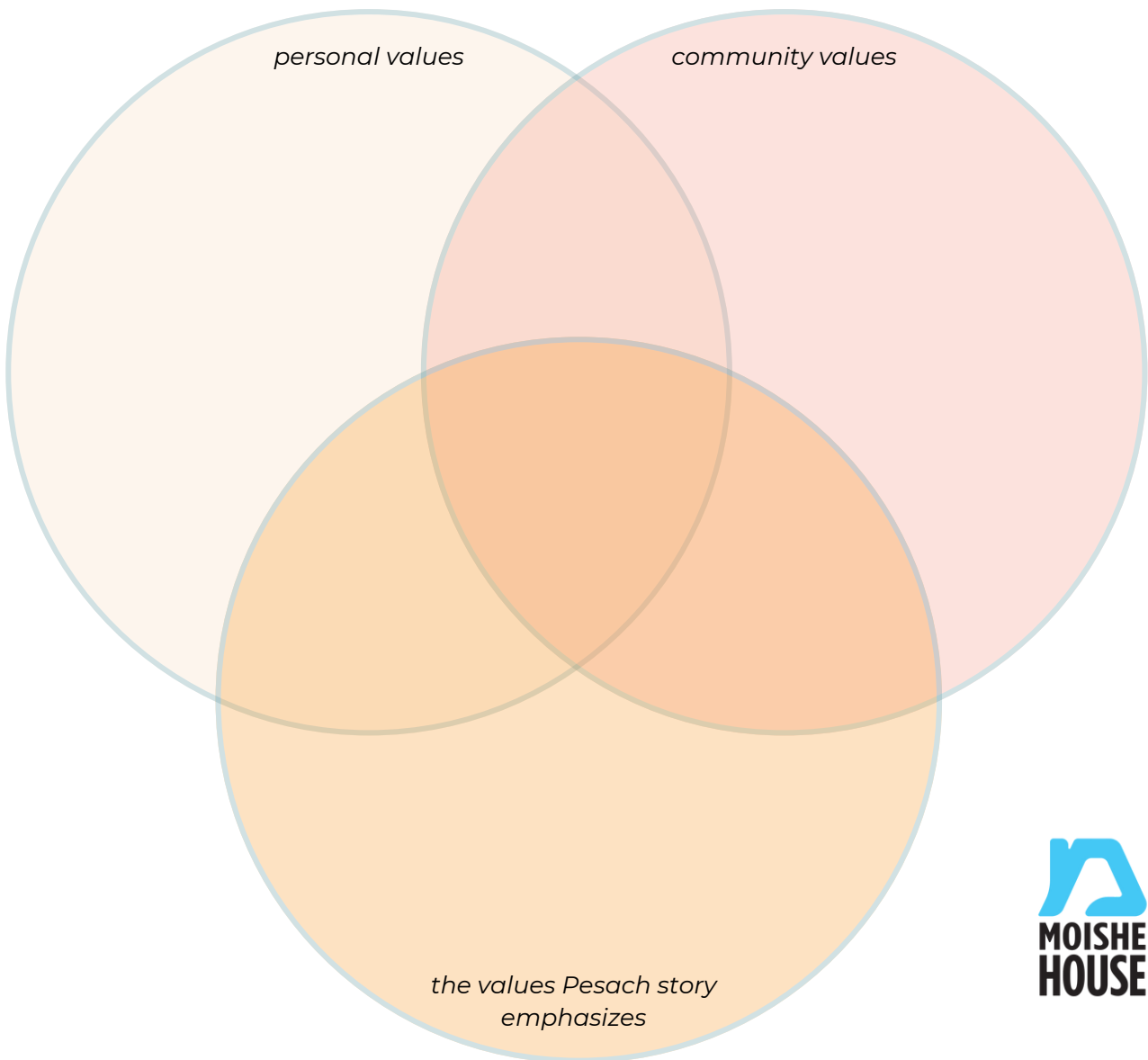
### Spark your conversation:

Think about the Passover story. Are you feeling connected to it? Is it challenging for you to relate to the ideas of it? Are there parts of the story that raise more questions for you?

*If you need a refresher - here is a video telling the story of Pesach*

### Finding Common Values

Use the diagram below and the following "Value Ideas" page to identify what are your: 1) *personal values* 2) *community values* 3) *the values Pesach story emphasizes*.



**Guiding questions:** Why do you think some values overlap while others stay unique to one circle? Take a look at your circles - reflect on which ones are filled and which one might be empty. Think about why is that and share with the group, while comparing your diagrams.

## Value Ideas



### **Fun + Happiness**

Adventure Spirit Enjoyment Lightness Amusement  
Enthusiasm Liveliness Merriment Experiences Happiness  
Gratification Gladness Joy Recreation Zest Indulgence  
Delight Fun

### **Connection + Belonging**

Belonging Relationships Harmony Sharing Teamwork Loyalty  
Family Friendship Love Inclusion Rapport Affinity Kinship  
Communication Kindness Understanding Acceptance  
Influence

### **Achievement + Productivity**

Accomplishment Growth Performance Effort Creation Success  
Capability Execution Drive Challenge Determination Wealth  
Improvement Greatness Productivity Competence Mastery

### **Intelligence + Knowledge**

Curiosity Wisdom Learning Insightful Informed Training  
Smartness Resourceful Knowledge Brilliance Clever Reason  
Thoughtful Understanding Logical

### **Creativity + Originality**

Innovativeness Originality Expressiveness Inventiveness  
Individuality Contemporary Imaginative Extravagance  
Ingenious Eccentricity Uniqueness Authenticity Creation  
Curiosity Beauty Openness

**Other Values:** .....

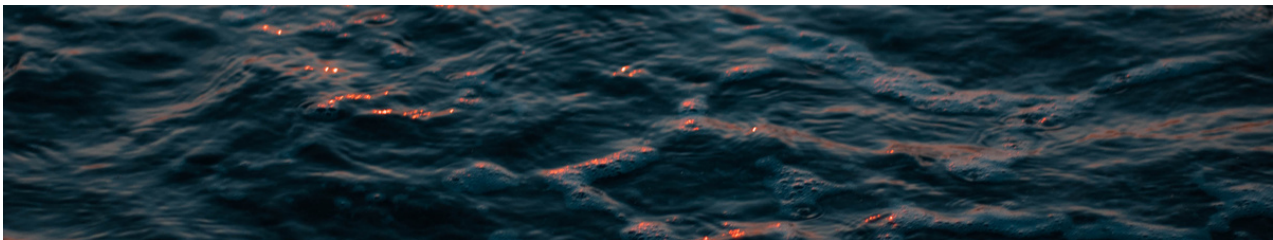
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## Seeing Yourself As A Pesach Story Hero

Who is a Jewish hero? - "A person who conquers their inclination." - Mishna Avot 4:1

Choose 2-3 texts about the Pesach story character, who resonates with your personal values. Find a partner to read it in chavruta and answer these guiding questions:

- *What about this character, action or situation changes it from ordinary to "heroic" ?*
- *How does this influence the larger Pesach story?*
- *What values do you see this "hero" portraying? What values does this "hero" inspire in their community?*



### **Nachshon (Courage, Authenticity, Influence)**

Rabbi Judah says: 'When the Israelites stood at the sea one said: 'I don't want to go down to the sea first.' Another said: 'I don't want to go down first either.' While they were standing there, and while Moshe was praying to God to save them, Nachshon jumped up, went down and fell into the waves.' - Talmud (Bavli, Sota36a), Mechilta (Parashat B'shalach)

### **Miriam (Spirit, Leadership, Wisdom)**

[When Miriam's only brother was Aaron] she prophesied... "my mother is destined to bear a son who will save Israel." When [Moshe] was born the whole house... filled with light[.] [Miriam's] father arose and kissed her on the head, saying, "My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled." But when they threw [Moshe] into the river her father tapped her on the head saying, "Daughter, where is your prophecy?" So it is written, "And [Miriam] stood afar off to know what would be[come of] the latter part of her prophecy." - Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 14a

Miriam is first mentioned by name at the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:20–21): "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. And Miriam chanted for them, 'Sing to the Lord, for Almighty has triumphed gloriously; horse and driver God has hurled into the sea.'" In the midrashic account, Miriam led the chanting, and she was the equivalent of them all, since she began the chanting (Pesikta Zutarta [Lekah Tov, Ex. 15:20]).



## **Moshe (Influence, Belonging, Compassion)**

Exodus 2:10-15

When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moshe, explaining, "I drew him out of the water." Some time after that, when Moshe had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, "Why do you strike your fellow?"...

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּבִאֶהוּ לַבַּת־פַּרְעֹה  
וַיְהִי־לָהּ לְבֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה  
וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן־הַמַּיִם מִשִּׁיתָהּ:  
וַיְהִי | בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה  
וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסַבְלָתָם  
וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה אִישׁ־עִבְרִי  
מֵאַחָיו: וַיִּפֹּן כֹּה וְכֹה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין  
אִישׁ וַיִּךְ אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֶהוּ  
בַּחֹל: וַיֵּצֵא בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי וַהֲנִה  
שְׁנַיִם־אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים נֹצְעִים וַיֹּאמֶר  
לְרַשֵּׁעַ לָמָּה תִּכֶּה רֵעִי:



## **Midwives (Loyalty, Inventiveness, Kindness)**

Exodus 1:15-20

The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool more precisely [the brick or stone supports used by Egyptian women during childbirth]. If it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth." And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לַמְיֻלְדֹת  
הָעִבְרִיֹת אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאֶחָת שִׁפְרָה  
וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּעָה:  
וַיֹּאמֶר בִּילְדֹכֶן אֶת־הָעִבְרִיֹת  
וְרֵאִיתֶן עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אֲסִיָּב הוּא  
וְהַמֶּתֶן אֹתוֹ וְאֲסִיבֶת הוּא וְחַיָּה:  
וַתִּירָאן הַמְיֻלְדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים  
וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶן מֶלֶךְ  
מִצְרַיִם וַתַּחֲיֶינן אֶת־הַיִּלְדִּים:  
וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם לַמְיֻלְדֹת  
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן מִדּוּעַ עֲשִׂיתֶן הַדָּבָר  
הַזֶּה וַתַּחֲיֶינן אֶת־הַיִּלְדִּים:  
וַתֹּאמְרֶינן הַמְיֻלְדֹת אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי  
לֹא כְנֻשִׁים הַמִּצְרִיֹת הָעִבְרִיֹת  
כִּי־חַיֹּת הֵנָּה בְטָרָם תְּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן  
הַמְיֻלְדֹת וַיֵּלְדוּ:  
וַיִּטֵּב אֱלֹהִים לַמְיֻלְדֹת וַיִּרְבַּ הָעָם  
וַיִּעֲצָמוּ מְאֹד:

**Yocheved (Determination, Love, Resourceful)**

Exodus 2:3

When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

וְלֹא־יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצְּפִינֹה  
 וַתִּקְחֵהּ לֹא תֵבֶת גְּמָא  
 וַתַּחְמְרֶהּ בַּחֲמֵר וּבִזְפֹת  
 וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד  
 וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל־שֵׁפֶת  
 הַיָּאֵר:

Moshe’s mother, Yocheved, loves her newborn son so much that she hides him from Pharaoh for three months. When she can no longer hide him, she weaves a basket and sets the baby boy afloat in the Nile. Yocheved’s love is strengthened by netzach—the faith that she can overcome any obstacle. - Omer Calendar of Biblical Women By Rabbi Jill Hammer

**Batya (Individuality, Bravery, Reason)**

When Pharaoh’s daughter’s handmaidens saw that she intended to rescue Moshe, they attempted to dissuade her, and persuade her to heed her father. They said to her: “Our mistress, it is the way of the world that when a king issues a decree, it is not heeded by the entire world, but his children and the members of his household do observe it, and you wish to transgress your father’s decree?” - Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 12b But transgress she did, Pharaoh’s daughter Batya defies her own father and plucks baby Moses out of the Nile.

**Tziporah (Loyalty, Resourceful, Community)**

Exodus 4:24-26

(24) At a night encampment on the way, the LORD encountered him and sought to kill him. (25) So Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin, and touched his legs with it, saying, “You are truly a bridegroom of blood to me!” (26) And when He let him alone, she added, “A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision.”

שְׁמוֹת ד': כ"ד-כ"ו  
 (כד) וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בַּמַּלְאָךְ וַיִּפְגְּשֶׁהוּ  
 יְהוָה וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמֵּיתוֹ: (כה) וַתִּקַּח  
 צִפּוֹרָה צֹר וַתִּכְרֹת אֶת־עֶרְלַת בְּנֵהָ  
 וַתִּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי  
 חַתָּן דָּמִים אַתָּה לִי: (כו) וַיִּרְף  
 מִמֶּנּוּ אִזּוֹ אֲמָרָה חַתָּן דָּמִים  
 (למולת): (פ)



Why does Moshe's wife Tziporah act in this way? Rabbinic legend says that God is angry with Moshe for failing to circumcise his son, and communicates this to Tziporah by causing Moses' sexual organs to swell! So Tziporah circumcises her infant son, making him part of the Jewish people. Tziporah's instinct is to act to save the life of her husband and her children. - Omer Calendar of Biblical Women By Rabbi Jill Hammer

## Showing, Not Seeing

Becoming Pesach story hero through Tikkun Olam



"In the Sephardic text of the Hagaddah, the command to project oneself back into the exodus narrative appears in a slightly, but meaningfully, different form. There, the obligation is to **show oneself** (*l'harot et atmzo*) as having come forth from Egypt. With the addition of a single Hebrew letter, this version changes the obligation from one commanding personal reflection to one governing the way in which one acts in the world. - from My Jewish Learning article "I Was Redeemed From Egypt"

*One way to show yourself in the Pesach story is by taking part in a Tikkun Olam program that puts your values into action!*

### **Tikkun Olam Program Ideas:**

#### Community Cleanup



The Great Global Cleanup is a worldwide campaign to remove billions of pieces of trash from neighborhoods, beaches, rivers, lakes, trails, and parks — reducing waste and plastic pollution, improving habitats, and preventing harm to wildlife and humans. *One generation goes and another generation comes; but the Earth remains forever. - Ecclesiastes 1:4*

#### Ukraine Response Tikkun Olam programs



Service is best done in partnership. Connect with a local organization/refugee agency/community center and ask how you can best support

- Possible service projects might include - cooking meals, serving meals, sorting donations, creating welcome kits, setting up apartments.
- [Tikkun Olam Ukraine Response Grant](#) and [resource](#)