

The Women's Seder Sourcebook:
Rituals and Readings for Use at the Passover Seder,
edited by Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, Tara Mohr and Catherine Spector.

The Women's Passover Companion:
Women's Reflections on the Festival of Freedom,
edited by Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, Tara Mohr and Catherine Spector.
Both published by Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.

It is said that those who linger over their celebration of Pesach at the Seder table through study are especially worthy of praise. These two volumes, produced by Jewish Lights Publishing in time for Passover 2003, make the fulfilling of this instruction an even greater pleasure than it has been hitherto. In spite of their titles, these books have plenty of material that will appeal to both sexes, as well as being an eloquent testimony to the vibrant spirituality and commitment that informs modern Jewish women's lives.

The first volume is a treasure house of readings, reflections, prayers and stories, some explicitly feminist others universal in their application, designed to follow the course of the Haggadah's ritual and enrich it in so doing. There are also pages of practical instructions showing how to make the Seder a success on every level.

The second volume, as its title suggests, takes at one and the same time a more general and a more specific approach. It explores more of the themes of Passover, especially around the subject of Freedom that is at the core of the festival, but also considers women's seders and haggadot, and the ways that women can claim or reclaim more of the details of Passover and its observance for themselves. Again the depth and breadth of spirituality and thought on the part of the contributors is overwhelming and inspiring.

I recommend both these volumes as a valuable addition to the corpus of literature that enables us, rabbis and lay leaders, as well as interested non-Jews and others involved in the world of inter-faith dialogue, to appreciate even more the power of the festival of Passover and the perennial nature of its principal theme.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh