

My People's Passover Haggadah, Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries, 2 vols.,
edited by Rabbi Lawrence A Hoffman PhD and David Arnow PhD
Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008.

Lawrence Hoffman and David Arnow have brought the style and approach of My People's Prayerbook to bear on the Passover Haggadah, probably the most loved liturgy of all in Jewish life. Following an excellent series of 9 introductory essays, each one considering different aspects of Pesach, its symbols and celebration, the text of the haggadah is analysed from a variety of angles, as per those in my People's Prayerbook, biblical, medieval and modern, historical and halakhic, Chasidic, feminist and personal spirituality to which a strand on modern haggadot has been added.

The result is a cornucopia of information and ideas that would enrich any Seder, providing it could be extended for at least a week to do justice to them all!

There are excellent notes and a very good glossary in each volume, and the second also contains details of early sedarim from the Mishnah and Tosefta as well as a haggadah text from the Cairo Genizah (The Dropsie Haggadah) that may be dated at the latest to the 10th or 11th centuries.

There are many ways in which My People's Haggadah can be used, that of adjunct to the family haggadah being the most obvious; I suspect though that if an enterprising Seder leader wishes to use it best s/he will go through it very carefully beforehand, selecting the choicest of the many excellent comments, ideas or facts and introducing them selectively during the evening of the Seder. Apart from anything else this guarantees years of extra fun and sparkling chidushim, giving added life to one of our most cherished rituals.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh