



Passover, Freedom, Miriam & Abortion Access

A Haggadah Reflection Insert from Red Tent Fund

Passover teaches that freedom means living with dignity, safety, and moral agency. As we retell the story of liberation from Egypt, we are called to reflect on what freedom demands of us in our own time.

The Exodus story reminds us that oppression is not only physical—it is also the denial of autonomy, safety, and the ability to make decisions about one’s own life. Liberation is not complete until all people can live with dignity and self-determination.

Jewish tradition recognizes the complexity of pregnancy and teaches that protecting the health, life, and dignity of the pregnant person is a sacred obligation. Across centuries of Jewish text and practice, there is a consistent understanding: preserving life and well-being—*pikuach nefesh*—takes precedence.

Miriam’s Cup

A cup of water honors Miriam, whose well sustained the Israelites throughout their journey in the wilderness. Miriam represents resilience, care, and the sustaining power of community.

Tonight, we expand Miriam’s legacy. Sustaining life also means ensuring that people have the ability to make decisions about their bodies, health, and futures.

Ritual Option: Fill a cup with water and pass it around the table, inviting each person to add a drop from their own glass, symbolizing shared responsibility and collective care.

Leader: We lift Miriam’s Cup to honor dignity, health, and life.

All: May all people have the freedom to make moral decisions about their bodies and futures.

A Fifth Question

Why speak about abortion access during Passover? Because Pharaoh’s oppression begins with control over birth—and it is resisted by women: midwives who defy him, and Miriam, who refuses to stand by as a child’s future hangs in the balance.

The Exodus story teaches that liberation means challenging systems that claim authority over our bodies and our lives. Freedom is not abstract—it is the ability to make deeply personal decisions about our bodies and our futures.

Our tradition calls us to protect that freedom with compassion, dignity, and trust in one another’s moral agency.

Text & Tradition

In the Exodus story, the Hebrew midwives defy Pharaoh’s command, choosing life, courage, and moral conviction over unjust law. Their resistance reminds us that ethical responsibility sometimes requires challenging systems that cause harm.

Jewish teachings approach pregnancy with nuance and care, recognizing that each situation is unique. Decisions are guided not by a single rule, but by values: compassion, health, dignity, and the lived reality of the person at the center.



Reflection & Discussion

Use these questions to spark conversation at your Seder table:

- Pharaoh seeks to control who will be born, while the midwives resist. In our own lives, what does it mean to claim real freedom over our bodies and our futures?
- The women in Exodus—midwives, Yocheved, Miriam—make deeply personal decisions under communal threat. How do you understand the balance between personal decision-making and communal responsibility when it comes to abortion?
- The midwives use the power they have to protect dignity and life. What might it look like, in our time, to support abortion access in a way that is grounded in dignity, compassion, and care?
- Miriam stands at the river—watching, waiting, and then stepping forward. What does it mean to truly accompany someone—not to decide for them, but to stand with them—as they navigate a complex and vulnerable choice?

Taking It Forward

Passover is not only a story we tell—it is a story we are still living into.

The Exodus begins with people who refuse to accept a world built on fear and control, and who instead choose to protect life, dignity, and possibility in the most intimate places.

As we remember that journey, we are called to help build a world where:

- People can access the care they need, held with dignity and without unnecessary barriers
- Decisions about our bodies, our health, and our families are met with support rather than judgment or control
- Communities show up for one another with compassion, responsibility, and care

Because freedom is not only a distant ideal. It lives in our bodies, in our choices,
and in how we care for one another.

Closing Blessing

May the story of the Exodus move us not only to remember, but to respond.

May we learn from the midwives, Shifrah and Puah, who used the power they had to resist harm and protect life—and may we have the courage to do the same.

May we follow Miriam, who stood at the water, watching and acting, and whose well sustained her people in the wilderness—teaching us to sustain one another with care, courage, and responsibility.

May we help create a world where abortion care is accessible, where decisions about pregnancy are met with dignity and support, and where no one is forced, coerced, or left alone.

And may we move, together, toward a future where liberation is not only promised, but lived—in our bodies, our choices, and our communities.

