

Passover

Found in translation

Labor of love produces a user-friendly Haggada

By Ron Kaplan
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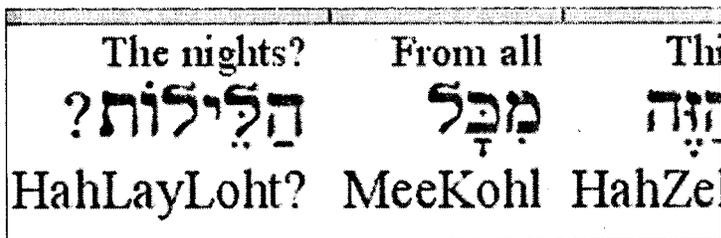
F. Ephraim Linker was dismayed when he attended a morning minyan in California in the 1970s and no one seemed able to lead the service. Returning to his faith after a lengthy absence, that scene haunted him for many years before it turned into a springboard for a second career.

Linker, a retired technical manual writer, spent several years developing the Hebrew Prayers Learning Series, a company that transliterates prayer books. He developed a model siddur, first for his own use then giving a few to friends. The latest title in the HPLS catalogue is a Passover Hagadda.

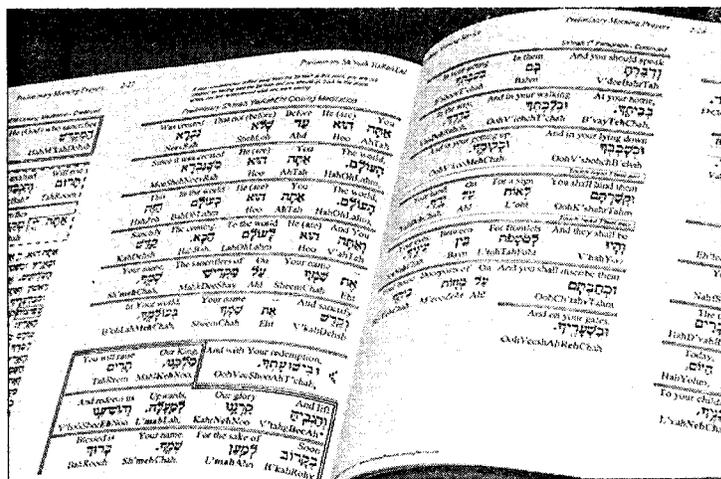
The English definition is directly above each Hebrew word, the phonetic transliteration directly below, providing what Linker terms a “fail-proof pronunciation” that allows people “to read Hebrew prayers and blessings with confidence.”

“I simply applied by tech background to a challenge that is clear to my heart: the challenge of greater participation in Jewish service,” said Linker. “I developed flow charts and pronunciation guides that take the user by the hand and ease him through the door of comprehension and participation.”

Linker “kind of left Judaism” after his bar mitzva. “When you get bar mitzvah but you don’t under-



F. Ephraim Linker’s new Haggada offers a “more flowing” transliteration. Photo courtesy: HebrewPrayersLearningSeries.com



stand what the siddur is, you leave it,” he told *NJ Jewish News* in a telephone interview. His interest was renewed when he attended a Chabad program in Berkeley several years later.

“It’s a labor of love,” he said. “The biggest challenge was trying to figure out the style and format.”

He said he had not removed anything from the standard Haggada, but “simple added a wealth of tools to aid in comprehension and participation in the Passover seder.”

The format is especially helpful to participants lacking a religious or Hebrew education. Readers see what each word means as they go along during the service, which Linker believes is an improvement over the usual “across the page format, where the poor reader is dashing around several pages trying to understand what it’s all

about.”

Last year was a trial run for the Haggada. A revised edition features original woodcut illustrations by Linker’s wife, Rebecca.

Linker self-publishes the books, which he says allows him a sense of flexibility and cost-effectiveness which he can pass along to customers. “I like it best when [they] guide me in what they want,” he said. “One man, for example, wanted to donate 100 books to his synagogue. I was able to create a dedication page honoring his contribution. That type of customization is something that self-publishing allows beautifully.”

The Haggada is available at HebrewPrayersLearningSeries.com

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The illustrations were created by Rebecca Linker.