

History of the Haggadah Regatta

by Carol Levin

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HAGGADAH REGATTA, my new Passover picture book Haggadah, launched this month. You're all invited to a Launch Party at JCC on March 10th, from 3 to 4:30 pm. The February issue of the Washtenaw Jewish News reviews the book about a seder on a little matzah raft. <https://carollewin.us/portfolio/> shows a sampling of the art and publication details. For the backstory...

Summer 2016

A three-week visit to help my daughter's family settle into their new Michigan home assures me that Ann Arbor is the place to be. This East Coast Grams has no doubts about her decision to move. My grandkids, Aaron and Julia, are then at delicious ages (one and three). Naomi and Ben, U-M Geology Professors, both have Michigander roots. In 1850, my Mom's family, the Silbermans, founded Detroit's Temple Beth El. Five generations later, their descendants enjoy the Apples & Honey fall festival for a first look at Jewish Ann Arbor.

Spring 2017

Naomi and I begin to plan for a Seder at my house. We agree to make it kid friendly. We need a Haggadah that works for us all. My Amazon search yields a riot of fun picture books for toddlers. I find family Haggadot geared to older children. What's missing from the book list? A beginner's Haggadah for Aaron and Julia. I'm a writer, and an artist and a do-it-yourselfer. Decades ago, I wrote *A Rosh Hashanah Walk*, (Kar-Ben Publishers, 1987.) An idea for a new holiday tale sprouts. While kayaking on the Huron, I spy a matzah raft with some old friends on board. When I was little, I discovered talking shoes at my Daddy's shoe store. These shoes are my crew.

In two-weeks time, I feverishly sketch, and write and weave seder essentials into the Haggadah. Staples at Westgate produces the beta version. Aaron's pal Jack and his folks, Brenna and Ben, join us for seder. The read-aloud gathers steam as we go around the seder table asking, "Who is?" and telling, "how" and "why" and having a foot-stomping good time. When the seder is over, a year of revisions begins.

Fall 2017

Indie authors at the Kerrytown Bookfest point me to the Thomson-Shore table. The book printers & publishers are having a fall open house. Touring the Dexter plant, I muse about self-publishing. I'm not there yet. The revisions continue.

Spring 2018

I upload files to Apple to print a full color book. The new 8"x 8" format is easier for little hands. Pastel crayon illustrations replace rough sketches. The original protagonist, a weathered captain, bows out. Two kids, a boy and a goat, now lead the seder crew. Digital goat-tracks urge viewers on from page-to-page. Text is color-coded to cue readers.

Post-Seder brings more revisions: I focus on pacing and page-turns; I paint watercolor illustrations; I think the book is ready. My Ann Arbor SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) group say, "It's ready." Query letters to agents and publishers are mailed. And I wait. I attend writer's conferences. And I wait...

Summer - Fall 2018

I return to Thomson-Shore and meet with their Creative Director, Tamra Tuller. Tamra's clear observations and feedback convince me to do it. Under her mentoring, I produce new illustrations, change layouts and select fonts. She guides me through the design process and skills needed to convert finished art into files. Wordsmith friends, Elaine Sims and Marion Short, help with final edits. Rabbi Ora refines phrases to suit a young audience. Clare Kinberg addresses sensitive issues as a librarian-educator-communicator. Phonetics maven Terri Ginsburg helps verify family-friendly Hebrew transliteration. Peretz Hirschbein (JCC Early Childhood Center Director) and Jessica Gillespie (PJ Library Director) facilitate the book launch and family Passover event. Thank you Ann Arbor.

Winter 2019

Shehechyanu !!!