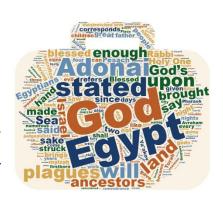# Haggadah Word Clouds

Topic
Haggadah Word Clouds

Word clouds are visual representations of text in which the frequency of word use in the text determines its size in the finished graphic. Word clouds allow learners to quickly assess prominent themes in texts. In this lesson you will find word clouds for the most recognizable and most word-dense sections of the *Maggid* portion of the *Haggadah* as well as one for the entire section. There is a corresponding lesson plus activities for use with all ages, either in a classroom or in a Seder setting.

Grade Level(s)
5th-8th

Goals for the Lesson/Activity
Students will:
- Analyze texts included in the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah
- Explore differences among various versions of the Passover story
- Discover the major themes of the *Maggid* section of the *Haggadah*
- Create their own telling of the Passover story
- Create a visual representation of part of the *Maggid* to take home and use at their Seder

Materials needed
- Copies of Maggid Word Clouds (separate download)
- Haggadot
- Pens or pencils and paper

Technology needed

- Tablets or computers for creating word clouds

Background for Teachers

Word Clouds
A word cloud is an image composed of words from a text, such as a song, poem, or speech, etc., in which the words that appear more frequently are depicted in larger type. There are many word cloud generators online. Among them, we like: www.wordclouds.com, www.worditout.com, and www.tagxedo.com. Each of these has different assets, such as font and color choice, design shape, word filters, etc.

Haggadah Word Clouds

Maggid

The *Maggid* section of the Passover *Haggadah* is the longest and perhaps the most complex of all of the Seder elements. The title, which means "telling" is the story of the Exodus from Egypt through questions and answers, biblical texts, songs, examples, and allegories. Included in this section are the Four Questions, the Four Children, Dayenu, the story about Five Rabbis at B'nei Brak, and *Ha Lachma Anya* (This is the bread of affliction…). This section of the Haggadah ends with the first part of *Hallel* (biblical psalms of praise) and the second cup of wine.

The rabbis categorized the following parts of the Maggid as retellings of the Passover story. They begin: *Avadim Hayinu* (Once We were Slaves), Our Ancestors Worshiped Idols, My Father was a Wandering Aramean, and Rabban Gamliel Taught.

Prepare in Advance

- If you choose to create word clouds with your class, and you're not already familiar with the technology, you may want to spend some time choosing the tool that's best for your setting.
- Make copies of the word clouds you'd like to use. A key follows.

Word Cloud Image Key:

Suitcase	The entire *Maggid* in both Hebrew and English
Four	Four Questions
Pyramid	*Avadim Hayinu* (We were slaves…)
Head and Shoulders	Four Children
Stone Idol or Castle	In the Beginning, Our Ancestors Worshipped Idols
Text Bubble	My Father was a Wandering Aramean
Droplet	Plagues
Check mark	Dayenu
Bone	Rabban Gamliel's Three Things

Haggadah Word Clouds

There is not a word cloud for every part of the *Maggid*, rather the most recognizable and most word-dense sections. There is also an image for the entire *Maggid* (including sections not represented individually here) both in Hebrew and in English.

Description of Activities

Let students know that you will be studying the *Maggid* portion of the Haggadah.

Solicit answers to the questions: What is the purpose of the *Maggid*? What is in the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah? If you choose, you can hand out *haggadot* for them to look through as they answer these questions. Fill in any information they might have missed.

If it hasn't been mentioned, let students know that the Four Questions are part of *Maggid.*

Ask students to tell you the main themes of the Four Questions and write these on the board or a large sheet of paper on the wall. Using these themes as a guide, ask students to brainstorm a list of 4-5 words they think figure most prominently in the text.

Hand out a copy of the Four Questions word cloud to each student. As a class, make a list of the most prominent words.

Discuss your findings, using these questions as a guide: Do the word lists match? What's different? Are you surprised by anything you see in the word cloud? Do you think that the word cloud accurately reflects the text?

Split students into four groups.

Give each group one of the four retellings of the Passover story. Avadim Hayinu, Our Ancestors Worshiped Idols, My Father was a Wandering Aramean, and Rabban Gamliel Taught.

Using only the text in front of them, ask them to find the main themes of the Passover story. After each group has had an opportunity to grapple with the texts for a few minutes, invite them to teach the story, according to their text, to the other groups.

After each group has taught, give each of them a copy of the word cloud containing the entire *Maggid*. Explain that this is comprised of not only the four versions of the story they just read, but also other texts they might be familiar with like The Four Children, The Ten Plagues and *Dayenu*. (Our image excludes the first part of *Hallel* (Psalms of Praise.)

Invite students to compare the two texts. Instruct them to look for the following:
Are the major themes different?
What themes do the two texts have in common?
Which text is closer to your understanding of the Passover story?
Is there anything that surprised you in the larger text?

Give each group of students access to technology. Tablets or computers will be the best, but phones can work as well. Instruct them to type their own version of the Passover story, using what they've learned about the themes of the Passover story.

If you have access to Internet and are working on tablets or computers, invite students to feed their text into a word cloud generator. If not, they can email you their work; and you can generate word clouds to be returned to them at the next class session. Encourage them to bring these pictorial representations to the Seder they attend.

If time allows, invite students to write their own modern versions of other iconic portions of the *Maggid,* such as the Ten Plagues, the Four Children, or *Dayenu.* When they have finished, invite them to compare the themes of their version with the original by looking at the word cloud for that section. Discuss the similarities and differences.

Invite students to make their writings into word clouds to be shared at their *Seder* as with the *Maggid* they wrote. Encourage them to lead a discussion comparing contemporary and ancient versions of the text.

Differentiation Options
Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance
- Have a student work one-on-one with a classroom assistant to pull out the themes.
- Allow students to dictate their narrative to someone else who will type it.
- Give a student the task of thinking of other symbolic shapes for some of the texts being read and analyzed.

For learners who need extension opportunities
- Invite students to compare the *Maggid* with the biblical telling of the Exodus from Egypt.
- Invite students to find different English interpretations of a section of the Haggadah and feed them into a word cloud generator for comparison purposes.

Haggadah Word Clouds

Other Ways to Use the Maggid Word Clouds

- Choose a few of the more well-known passages, and hand them to students to guess which parts of the *Maggid* they see.

- Encourage students to look at verbs and assess what actions are most common in the Passover story. Ask if they are surprised or if they expected other verbs to be at the forefront.

- Use these images to replace the *Maggid* portion of your *Seder.*

- Have students compare the Hebrew and English versions of the *Maggid.* Do certain words appear more often in one language? Can they use the shapes and sizes to help them translate?

- Have students write the story of Passover in small groups. Enter these into a word cloud generator and see how theirs matches the *Maggid*.

- Invite students to use the words that jump out at them to create a story or poem.

- Hand a different portion of the *Maggid* to each student or participant and have them tell the story of Passover using only the most frequently used words.

- Compare two different parts of the *Maggid* noting the themes that are emphasized in each part.

- Have participants brainstorm other shapes that could be used to represent parts of *Maggid* or other portions of the *Haggadah.* Have them sketch their ideas.

- Compare the *Maggid* word cloud to the telling of the Passover story in the Torah. Compare *Rabban Gamliel's* requirements to the Torah's telling of requirements for Passover observance.

Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago's Online Resource Center
Lead author: Rabbi Toby Manewith, Linda Sonin