



Passover and Infertility - Charoset and Apples

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Early in the Exodus story Pharaoh's decreed hard labor for the Children of Israel and that their baby girls may live but their baby boys may not. Despite this harsh reality, they continued to have children. The Midrash teaches that this is connected to apples. The women would take their husbands to the fields to entice them. They would conceive and then return to the fields to give birth and prevent the Egyptians from killing their sons. This all happened *under apple trees* as it says in Song of Songs 8.5: "*under the apple tree I roused you; it was there your mother conceived you, there she who bore you conceived you.*"

During enslavement in Egypt, one of the ways the Children of Israel expressed their spiritual freedom was by conceiving their future. Literally. Their hope was that the next generation would serve God and not Pharaoh.

Some among us, however, are not free to conceive their future. Their hopes and dreams are enslaved by fertility challenges. Infertility can feel like a form of bondage: bodies that feel broken or unable to perform as we wish, decisions that seem impossible at times to navigate, and circumstances that seem out of our control.

On Passover we eat charoset to symbolize the clay our ancestors used to hold together the bricks they were making. The charoset also represents the sweetness of their redemption to serve God. By adding apples to our charoset, we invoke these symbols as well as the connection to fertility. We connect our past, present and future with the Song of Songs, the apple trees, intimacy, conception, birth and redemption.

Meditation for making and eating charoset with apples for those experiencing fertility challenges:

God of our ancestors, our souls are afflicted.

While we may be free in most ways, our dreams of fertility seem out of reach.

With the sweetness of these apples, comes the bitter taste of disappointment and loss.

Under the apple tree – shade us with your blessings.

Under the apple tree – may we find comfort with each other.

Under the apple tree – help us conceive a hopeful future.

Creator and Redeemer of all, let this charoset strengthen our souls.

May the sweetness of its apples linger with us.

Grant us clarity and hope along the way
to redemption.

