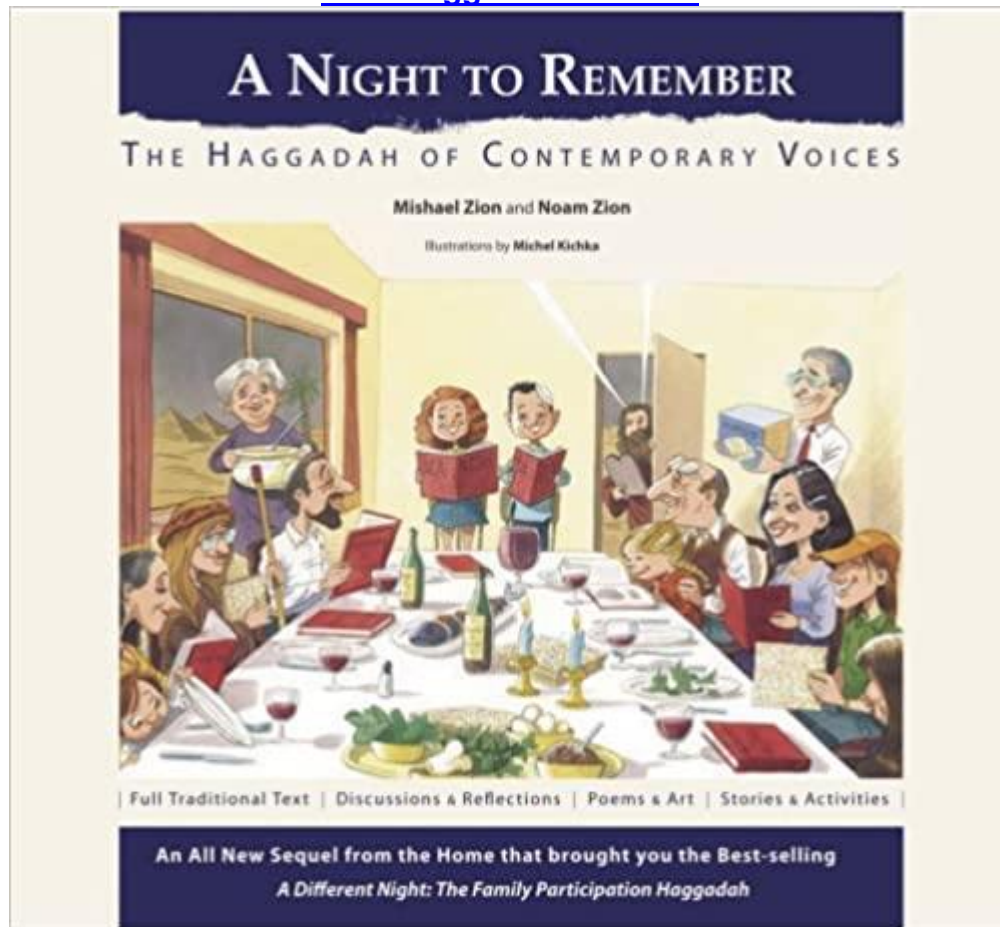


Toward a More PARTICIPATORY SEDER

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I Customizing and Liberating Your Seder

1. Homemade Judaism by Noam Zion: Making Your Passover Seder Meaningful

Home is where Jews are made, for such family events leave indelible memories, however, passively “passing over” traditions is not enough. Rather **meaning must be made, not preached or handed over. Meaning is made actively and collaboratively.** The traditional ritual order, which is the original meaning of the word “seder,” is only the **external scaffold** which we must adjust and fill with our own issues of freedom and identity. Each seder must be **customized** to maximize participation, by capitalizing on the hidden talents of the guests. The seder must be **personalized** to make it relevant to each person in this moment. When asked what is being served at the seder, the answer must be **food for thought** and **experiences for creating family memories.**

2. Liberating the Seder from Traditional Misconceptions and Returning to the Rabbis' Original Educational Vision by Rabbi David Hartman

The rabbinic haggadah was meant to facilitate lively dialogue. Unfortunately seder too often becomes rote reading to "zoom" through, rather than a drama of creative roles. Don't let the printed word paralyze the imagination. Talk. Discuss. You are free. to shape your own seder.

3. Nostalgia versus the Freedom to Experiment: The Seder without our Grandparents by Shai Zarhi, Kibbutz Genigar

So many Seders take place around a great gap - the grandparent that isn't here anymore. Many families reminisce longingly about the wonderful Seders that their grandparents used to prepare and lead. "Ever since grandpa or grandma, zaide and bobie, passed away, we haven't been able to fill their place." Grandpa insisted we read the entire Haggadah and out of respect we lingered a little longer around the table. Grandma's recipes were our tie to tradition. They made us feel as if they had heard the story of the Exodus from Moses himself - even if their Seder was long and sometimes boring. Tonight we miss them and we feel apprehensive - how will we fill the gap they left?

Yet we have to admit - there is also a certain feeling of release: Now we can add variety to the Haggadah and create something new, our own Seder. If we're lucky and we invest in preparing our own memorable night, some day we might become the "grandparent" and our traditions might be carried on by our children and our children's children.

II Warmups and Icebreakers

A D N – A Different Night: Family Participation Haggadah and Seder Supplement

NTR – A Night to Remember: Haggadah of Contemporary Voices

1. Pre-seder Homework:

- a. assignments for special recipes (especially haroset taste test), dips, best red wines (not sacramental sweet)
- b. props: to bring the best wine, favorite pillow, a brick, leeks or scallions for Dayenu, plagues bags, Pharaoh's dress up, gifts, stuffed animals for songs
- c. memorabilia: family heirlooms, personal candles sticks, kiddush cups and seder plates
- d. tzedakah certificate for Passover-appropriate donation
- e. traditional custom of reviewing laws of Pesach 30 days before seder and prereading the Haggadah on Shabbat before Pesach

2. Setting and Scenery: background music, posters, placemats, plastic frogs on the table, family photos of earlier seders

3. Light candles and bless all the children and relatives (those here, those on zoom, and those not able to participate) – **NTR 6-7; A DN 18**

4. Open with a Joke (*Dvar Bidihuta*)

- a. funny songs
- b. Had Gadya with stuffed animals and Old MacDonald animal sounds – NTR 132
- c. storytelling, dress up and Bible books for the children NTR 143-147,
- d. cartoons

5. Self-introduction of all guests by asking them a question (for example, recall worst or best seder, or how did they contribute this year to greater freedom in the world, or how welcome strangers and overcome prejudice, or favorite freedom fighters). Ask everyone to sign in on an annual guest list in one of the family haggadahs. Take a family photo to add to a multiyear Passover album.

LAST LOOK

Waiting for Good Dough



Pesach Cartoons

Arranged by Noam Zion, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem,
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Author of *A Different Night Family Participation Haggdah*;
A Different Light Hanukkah Candle Lighting



HADASSAH MAGAZINE הודסה

III FIVE OBSTACLES TO A PARTICIPATORY SEDER

OBSTACLE #1: The GROWLING STOMACH

- MFAQ: when do we eat?

Answer: There is no mitzvah to starve! Not by parsley alone shall we survive.

Serve extensive KARPOS = Greek for Vegies, and Dips (strawberries in chocolate fondue, guacamole, gefillte fish, hard boiled eggs, potato chips, artichokes),

VORSPEIS= appetizers, trail mix.

OBSTACLE #2– The Haggadah itself

- Second MFAQ: How fast can we get through the Haggadah as fast as possible?
(1) Unintelligible Archaic Haggadah: Maxwell House Haggadah (1923)



(2) Content of Traditional Haggadah is boring.

(3) Mode of using Haggadah i.e. public recitation is obstacle to the goals of seder

Answer: For the Rabbis, the Haggadah was meant to be a leader's guide, not a libretto; not a High Holidays prayerbook to read through responsively by recitation, but a checklist of activities. It is a how-to manual for a primarily oral participatory performance, not primarily a written book to be read.

- Don't just go around taking turns reading aloud and don't correct each other's mistakes, but use Haggadah as prompt i.e. jumping off points for engaging in crucial activities:
- (a) Food for Thought and asking questions beginning with symbolic foods to be explained
 - (b) storytelling so as to see yourself as if you went out of Egypt
 - (c) dialoguing between generations by means of questions and stories
 - (d) discussions about freedom and slavery, discrimination and poverty, to analyze the ancient and modern problems that must be solved to achieve contemporary freedom
 - (e) singing and festivities

OBSTACLE #3: Preparations: Too much work! Dead tired by time of seder!

Answers:

- (a) Don't clean too much. You can always mentally eliminate all hometz.
- (b) Don't cook too much by yourself. Order out or better: delegate culinary contributions and thus maximize participation and "ownership." Prepare menu listing foods and contributors of the food. Find wine maven; expert at dips; etc.
- (c) Prioritize preparation of **CONTENT** of seder over **CONTENT** of menu

FREE COUPON: It is more important to prepare the content of your seder, than to clean your house and cook your meal. Take this coupon and decrease your cleaning by one hour and devote that hour to thinking about ways to involve the family in a participatory Seder.

- (d) Delegate the **CONTENT**. Tap the existing talent. Use Seder Planners of NTR, AD N

Surprise Guests: What to do with Bob Dylan and Marlon Brando at Your Seder

The Reform rabbi, Haskell Bernat, recalls his first Passover at the prominent Temple Israel of Hollywood. He was expected to conduct a public seder at the synagogue, just as had his predecessor who put on a show and invited eminent Los Angeles personalities. Bernat, however, believed in intimate family seders at home. He agreed reluctantly to lead the public seder but declined to prepare a dramatic program.

Bernat was about to start with an expected 300 attendees, when in walked unexpected guests — Bob Dylan along with two well-known non Jews — a First Nations chief and Marlon Brando. In panic

mode the rabbi asked the president of the congregation, “Are we built on an Amerind burial plot?” Thinking on his feet, Bernat thought of creative ways to involve his surprise guests at the seder.

He asked Marlon Brando to do a dramatic reading in English of the Kiddush, while the rabbi explained that Passover is about the liberation of all nations (to make it relevant to the chief).

Later he

asked his cantor to bring her guitar and then invited Bob Dylan to sing *Blowing in the Wind* with its appropriate Passover lyrics, “Yes, ‘n’ how many years can some people exist, before they’re allowed to be free?” Next year 500 people showed up for the public seder.

Obstacle #4- The Family – It may be the biggest obstruction to improving your seder?

How to maximize participation and “buy-in”? Advice:

- a. **Build coalitions. Don’t do it on your own.**
- b. **Invite interested and interesting guests, especially pastor or imam who will spontaneously ask good questions and put the family on its best behavior to make it an impressive seder.**
- c. **Delegate parts of the preparation in advance according to the talents and preferences of the strongest participants.**
- d. **Prepare and print out a program of those preparing parts of the seder.**
- e. **Don’t worry too much about rocking the boat, but innovate. Make sure to change something every year. But beware: “Never change more than 10% in any one year.”**

Obstacle #5 – The Anxieties of the Perplexed Seder Leader

Advice:

- a. **Decide what is most important to you. You cannot satisfy everyone, but you can be inclusive so almost everyone finds something they do like.**
- b. **Don’t worry about controlling everything, but conduct a jazz style seder**
- c. **Maximize participation so people make their own meaning.**
- d. **Don’t worry about getting it wrong. Learn and experiment. Then try again in different ways the next year.**

Conclusion: Advice for a Lively Seder

1. The real question is not why do we keep Passover but how do we continue to keep Passover year after year and keep it from becoming stultified! How can we be privileged to plan the seder, so that, as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook said:
"The old may become new and the new may become holy." – Ira Steingrut
2. Only the lesson which is enjoyed can be learned well. One does not learn unless one's heart is drawn to the subject. – Rav Judah HaNasi, editor of the Mishna
3. Ah, Jews are very impatient with doing the same thing over and over again. It's gotta be different. – Arthur Miller, American Jewish playwright
4. 10% Rule – never change more than 10% at any one seder. Keep traditions but always add some innovations.
5. Recall: The haggadah is meant to function as a how to manual that invites you to shape your own seder and customize it each year to your guests
6. Trying conducting the Seder as a symphony or as a Jam Session so as to maximize participation

The Door of Hope

The "door of hope" is still open; things are not what they might be = even when what they might be isn't totally different from what they are.

We still believe, or many of us do, what the Exodus first taught:

first, that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt;

second, that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land;

and third, that "the way to the land is through the wilderness."

There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching. –

Professor Michael Walzer, "Exodus and Revolution"

Beware of Complaining about Boring Seders

[In medieval Catholic Europe] religion was not a laughing matter, at least for the officials assigned to enforce orthodoxy. They did not treat even trivial jokes lightly. In France, a villager named Isambard was arrested for having exclaimed, when a friar announced after mass that he would say a few words about God, "The fewer the better."

In Spain, a tailor named Garcia Lopez, coming out of church just after the priest had announced the long schedule of services for the coming week, quipped that:

"When we were Jews, we were bored stiff by one Passover each year, and now each day seems to be a Passover and feast-day." Garcia Lopez was denounced to the Inquisition.

(Steven Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 236)