

## SEDER Activities

### Assignments to Prepare in advance:

- a. What the seder means to me in 6 words. Deposit in basket and pull out. Someone reads it and others guess who wrote it.
  - b. Write up two questions each about Pesach ritual, about Exodus and about Judaism – one simple fact question and one one-ended thought question. Deposit in basket and ask child to pick out four.
  - c. This is your journey: Freedom from and freedom to: From what this year have you freed yourself and toward what new goals have you progressed. Bring your favorite text on freedom.
  - d. Dayenu. What have you experiences where you were so grateful you said: Dayenu. This is so satisfying that it has made my life worthwhile and me overjoyed.
  - f. Shifra and Puah Award. Pick story of resistance to tyranny like midwives.
  - g. Bring prop to tell one episode of Exodus (like backback, boots, basket). Then arrange all props in order of episodes from Biblical tale and ask each person to retell their part in order.
  - h. Nahshon Award. When did I stand up or see someone stand up to show courage against conformity or take first step in difficult process.
  - i. Miracle. When did I experience that I felt was miraculous in colloquial usage (not necessarily supernatural)
  - j. Favorite Peach memory or most bizarre seder.
  - k. Choose quote about freedom and slavery that you agree with. Read outloud. Why did you choose it?
  - l. What part of haggadah gives a message you think relevant to the President or prime Minister for his next term?
  - m. Prepare interview with five questions for Pharaoh or Moses or Miriam.
  - n. Place three slips under each plate: comment/question/story-anecdote. Try to share one of each during the seder and use up all three slips which one then deposits in box. Or give different tasks for each seder participant under their plate.
  - o. How is this year different for you than the previous seder?
  - p. Special guest. Who would you invite to the seder and what does that person have to say to us. For example, my grandmother or ML King.
  - q. Who is the fifth child not at the seder? Describe 4 types of grandparents following the model of four children.
  - r. Write your own Haiku poem on freedom or rebirth and bring to read and to post on chart.
  - s. Build a Lego site of Egyptian slavery of crossing of Red Sea and use it as centerpiece.
  - t. Prepare four children as four examples of politicians, of dogs for dog lovers, of cars for car lovers (like economy family car for wise child; Cadillac convertible gas guzzler for wicked child; VW Bug for simple child etc ); flowers. Bring the four pictures and explain your choices.
  - u. writer letter to Moses, to your grandfather (alive or dead) etc before seder with question or telling him what Pesach of Judaism has become in your family
  - v. Musical instruments for singing Hallel with Miriam tambourine
  - w. Hide four questions under each plate or hide tasks like lead song, charade of plague. c. Ask someone to uncover his question and pose that question to the group.
  - x. Choose theme for seder like inner slavery, ancient Egypt, foods as symbols, civil disobedience, women heroes, questions, etc.
- Retracing Road to Freedom. Prepare with photos from internet story of Ethiopian Jewry's Operation of Moses and Solomon. Or Soviet Jewry Movement or Civil Rights. Discuss how people organized to help redeem these groups.

- y. Each one brings a second haggadah rich in commentary and add its viewpoints where relevant to the seder
- z. What I am most looking forward to/dreading in the seder?

**Ma Nishtana assignments.** Under each chair or pre-assigned places the seder leader places an envelope with a secret assignment which everyone is asked to read to him/herself as seder begins. For example, one person is asked to play the wicked child and ask pointed questions and sneer at ideas at seder and to display physically disgust at what is going on. All during the seder – until discovered – that person plays that secret role, until someone notices and declares – Ma Nishtana and identifies the weird behavior. Similar tasks were given to simple, wise and does not know how to ask children.

For example, my 85 year old hard of hearing father was asked to comment to various speakers – “please speak more softly” – until he was discovered. (Yedidya Zion)

The letter read as follows:

**SEDER IMPOSSIBLE MISSION: Ma Nishtana**

Your mission tonight for the Seder is of utmost weirdness and stupidity – yet its purpose is to make this night like no other.

If you are caught acting like an idiot and nobody understands what you are doing, do NOT contact us for we will take no responsibility for the consequences on this evening.

Your mission is:

Every time someone says “Pesach” you utter the sound: Boom!  
(Similar assignemtn for Maror or Matza with different sounds)

When someone catches you and says “**Ma Nishtana**” and identifies exactly your wierd question-provoking behavior, then you can stop acting strange.

The winner gets a Pesach symbol for each person “out-ed.”

Signed,  
Seder Impossible

**Biur Hametz** with old lulav in morning,

**Chametz** talk (like New Year's resolutions) Duration: 5 minutes, during the seder:

- 1) Turn to the person sitting next to you and tell them about the "chametz" that you want to get rid of in yourself this year, in your internal spring cleaning.
- 2) Alternatively, ask for volunteers to share their response with the whole group.

**Symbolic Biur hametz** of symbolic aspects of life we wish to eradicate. Just before seder everyone receives a posted sticker to write their own private hametz = yetzer hara. Then collect and place in aluminum foil wrapped waste paper basket and burned on porch. Recite the prayer for removing *yetzer hara* from *A Diff Night* p. 14

**Beshisha Tunisian custom** normally performed on Rosh Hodesh Nisan can be performed just prior to Seder with keys used to stir oil (originally oil and grain) and readings about opening up our lives and liberating ourselves from all that locks us in. Ask each one to say what doors they wish to unlock this year in their personal enslavement.<sup>1</sup>

## A Second Seder Plate

**a. Israeli Mementos:** Ask participants to bring souvenirs and mementos from Israel, then retell stories of one's relationship to Israel.

**b. Symbols of Personal Jewish Memory .** What heirlooms represent your family's Jewish identity. For example, one rabbi uses his grandmother's Pesach ladle

**Fill seder** plate at the table before the children and with their help explaining each item. Ebn Leader wears a multipocketed jacket from which he fouls each time.

## Openers of Seder:

**Sign in** each guest in the haggadah and take a group photo before the seder for a Pesach album to be consulted each year as to who came and what became of them in that last year.

**Subscribing to the Seder.** Introduce yourself and tell us one thing you wish to get out of the seder. This shows that each guest has signed on a participant in the seder just as in the Temple each person had to enlist as a subscriber (*minui*) on the Korban Pesach for its sacrifice to be efficacious. (Reb Zalman Schachter (2013)

**Collect all Watches.** Chief rabbi of Uruguay at public seder sent around children with basket at beginning to collect everyone's watch because no one was allowed to say hurry up it is getting late. This was the spirit of five rabbis in Bnai Brak who lost a sense of time.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapt the Tunisian custom of Beshisha for Seder Night. This ceremony celebrates the opening of the New Year for originally it is performed by Tunisian Jews on Rosh Hodesh Nisan viewing it as a New Year. Then parents pour olive oil on the little finger of each family member who then dips it in a sweet grain mixture. This is of course inappropriate for Seder but one may adapt: In the Zion family we took a key and each person stirred a honey mix reciting the Beshisha poem:

*Hapoteach bli mafteiach – ptach lanu bli mafteach. Ptach lanu kol hadelatot, shvor meialeini et ha manul.*

The Divine opener of gates without a key, open for us the doors without a key.

Break the lock for us. Stir the Beshisha with a key.

Be gracious to us, have mercy on us, bring us Rabenu Nissim the Egyptian (= Elijah the prophet who will make miracles).

**Round the table:** State your strangest seder ; who you would bring to seder – fictional or real – and introduce him to us or speak in first person.

**Spill a cup.** One father would tip over cup of wine intentionally at Kiddush and say: "Now we have gotten done with that and cannot go on without anyone feeling nervous about soiling the table cloth."

**Signposts of Seder.** Prepare cards on sticks AND signs for a felt board for the 15 *simanei haseder*. Ask each person in order at seder to hold up his/her card at the appropriate part. Ask a child to put sign up each time. Sing *Kadesh Urchatz* up to the point of the newest ritual each time. (For example, for Maggid sing: *Kadesh Urchatz Karpas Yahatz Magid....STOP*).

**Ha Lahma.** Hold up a symbol of what enslaves you, what aspect of your life that needs enrichment or what aspect is "over-blown, puffed up" and needs simplification .

### **Yahatz (Elana Zion-Golumbic)**

Everyone please take a whole matza in hand. Close your eyes. Feel the matza's ridges, its roughness and dryness. Think about poverty in the world. Think of something broken in your life. Empathize with the poor and the alienated. Feel where you will break the matza creating a division between the bigger portion – the afikoman - and the smaller. We will lsoe and then search for and finally find that other half. That will symbolize our hope that brokenness and poverty need not be permanent.

Now as you break the matza listen to the sound. Break.

Now place afikoman in special embroidered Afikoman bags and assign who will do the hiding. Establish the prizes and a per centage to be donated to Tzedakah with matching funds from adults.

Read Leonard Fein's explanation about why we are still slaves (*A Diff Night*, 39)

Bring can of food to give to poor after seder or name of organization (like Mazon) to whom you gave money for food before the seder.

### **Four Questions**

**Ma Nishtana** . How have I changed in a year? How has the world changed in a year?

### **Question of Dafur** (Or Rose and Ruth Messinger)

Contemporary reading about slavery and genocide in Dafur in Sudn and what could abut have not done about it. The format is four questions and four answers. Leave a place at table for Dafur refugee.

Then a report from New Israel Fund on a new Supreme Court ruling that foreign workers brought to Israel are no longer tied unconditionally to their employers who exploit them terrible.

**Ask everyone to bring in four questions** (about seder, freedom, Exodus, Moshe plagues etc) of their own on index cards. Then pick from hat by youngest child and collect answers from anyone at table. Limit answering sessions to three minutes each. Or set five spots in seder when someone must pick and read their own question. (Shawn Fields Meyer)

What are my questions about Judaism –on simple, one hard (challenging, that really bothers me).

Yemenite custom to hand the youngest the roasted egg to hold while singing Ma Nishtana.

Yemenites do not have a seder plates but all the items are spread on the whole table

### **Games with nuts or Greek "Kattabos" where flick wine to hit something**

#### **Avadim Hayenu Bibliodrama. (Heftziba Mozes-Zion)**

Imagine the long trip from Egypt to Israel. Think of crisis in slavery and in the desert. Identify with a person (an Egyptian in plague of darkness, Hebrew crossing Red Sea) or an object (Moses' staff or basket, etc ), then retell the story for a few minutes from your character/prop's point of view.

Some people do first half of seder up to the eating of matza in living room while reclining on couches or on pillows on the thick rug but they use white wine to limit stains and serve hoer d'oerves. Then everyone stands to make the official move to the dining room led by seder leader with a staff or broom stick or sugar cane singing Avadim hayenu and stepping across a trough of water entitled the Red Sea. Sometimes this is done in the backyard with signs for stopping point sin the desert.

**Onion Tears.** One grandfather would cut onions at the table for Avadim Hayenu while talking about slavery until everyone was crying.

#### **Avadim Hayinu Pipecleaners**

- 3-4 **pipe cleaners** for every participant

Ask participants: "In Egypt, we were slaves. What are some symbols of slavery?"

Write out the answers, until you get to the idea of chains

Explain to the participants: "We have one song during the seder that reminds us - 'We were slaves, and now we are free' - *Avadim Hayinu*."

Pass out the pipe cleaners and encourage the participants to make chains (they can be attached around the wrists). Explain that since at the end of the song we are free, we will break our chains.

#### **Avadim Conflict Mediation (Ehud Zion-Waldoks)**

Two volunteers are needed to present case for Moses and case for Pharaoh. However do not argue your view. Just tell us what you want. Initially representatives usually tell what they want from the other but gradually the mediator separates out what are our essential interests from what are our demand. Looking for common ground if there is any is the goal.. Could this 10 plague conflict have been solved more rationally?

**My Mitzraim.** Where this year I felt in a tight spot = literally *mitzraim* as straits. How I felt when things spread out for me (Israel is called *eretz rechava* = the broad wide land).

For **non Jews** ask them to read about story of midwives or of Pharaoh's daughter saving Jewish babies. For Jews-by-choice ask them in advance if they would be comfortable to read about Avraham and Sarah in Mitchila and retell their story of choosing to be Jews.

Appoint a **movie director** and have him/her cast the new version of the Exodus using contemporary actors suggested by guests and suggest stunts and movie tricks to make plagues. How would you do the burning bush? Whose voice would you use to represent God?

**Role play** a custody fight between Pharaoh and God as to who should be awarded guardianship of Bnai Israel?

### **Exodus Dress-up and Games**

- Children appear in pajamas as if awakened in middle of night for the Exodus.
- What would you pack if you had five minutes to abandon your home and only room for two items of sentimental value?
- Charades for Pesach objects or Exodus character or Haggadah phrases

### **Avadim Hayenu Medley of Songs** (Jonathan Price and Naomi Schachter)

One family took five of their favorite songs (mainly their children's favorite songs) and wrote sequays between them to fit the story of the Exodus.

The Pesach story will be retold tonight in song in aversion you have never heard.  
The curtain rises over Egypt where our ancestors were slaves leading a bitter life.  
But not life without hope or song, they sang: SWING LOW!

Then as Moses their leader escaped from Egypt to the burning bush in the desert, he felt all alone and sang:  
I WALKED A LONELY ROAD

Then God revealed himself to Moses and told him about the ten plagues he would bring on the Egyptians and God taught him to sing:  
FROG SONG.

At the ninth plague in great darkness, the Egyptians sang:  
SOUNDS OF SILENCE.

Then Moses sang to Pharaoh that before it is too late:  
LET MY PEOPLE GO.

Then as the Jews went through the Red Sea and saw the enemy crushed, they felt free and they felt like angels, so they sang:  
I BELIEVE I CAN FLY.

Then they wandered the desert for forty years singing:  
COUNTRY ROADS.

### **The Exodus News**

- Split people up into groups and place them at tables
- Tell them that the object of this activity is to create their own edition of "Exodus News" a local newspaper that not only remembers the time of the Jewish exodus out of Egypt, but also speaks to today's enslavement. Each person should contribute one piece. Examples: story, interview, picture, column, etc.
- After the group has written all of their pieces, they should be put together to form their newspaper.

- Allow time for each group to share with the others.

Bring pile of bricks (or lego) and in silence each one adds a brick and says only one word associated with slavery, oppression, walls that are bad, as wall is built.

### **Role Playing for the Elderly<sup>2</sup>**

Time Duration: 30+ minutes

When to use it: As a stand-alone activity

You live the life of a man or woman slave. You are aging and feel the effects of the hard labor more every year. There is no respite for the older worker in the eyes of the Egyptians, although sometimes the young adults are able to help you. You see that joy and wonder have been extinguished from the eyes of your children as they come to resemble you more and more. You may be a grandparent, or are thinking about what that may be like. This brings up memories of your own childhood, young adulthood and your parents and grandparents. You have heard Moses' demands and God's promises, but you are unsure whether you want to join the movement to leave Egypt.

**Tasks:** Prepare a role-play for one of these scenes.

#### **Scene A: Living as a Slave**

- Do you ever reflect on your life, and if so, what are your thoughts?
- Do you feel you are still able to protect or aid your children? How?
- How do you feel about what your children are like as adults?
- What advice would you give your children as they grow older and become parents themselves?
- Do you feel that you have attained any wisdom? Explain.
- What does "being an Israelite" mean to you?

*Or*

**Scene B: Leaving Egypt** (the plagues, killing the lamb, "borrowing" things from the Egyptians, crossing the Red Sea)

- What was your reaction to the plagues, especially the 10<sup>th</sup> plague?
- What have you learned about God from the things you witnessed?
- How has your experience leaving Egypt affected your assumptions about what your life will be like? How has it affected your children?
- What did you do when you were told to step into the Red Sea? What did this teach you about yourself?

**Passover Bibliodrama:** Bibliodrama is a technique used to bring our text to life. It is often used to add voices to the characters of the tanach who are left without added subtext. Using bibliodrama allows the characters and the story to come to life for those who are participating. As we may have language barriers in the FSU on our upcoming trip, bibliodrama could be used as a way to enliven the text. Instead of using our words to add personal midrash upon the Maggid section of our Passover story, it would be appropriate to use our bodies. Pantomime, a form of drama that does not require words, is an ideal way to involve our communities in the Passover storytelling.

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<sup>2</sup> From the Leader's Guide to *The Family Participation Haggadah*

**Pantomime.** Ask a group of participants to plan and then act out the following:

- *The Israelites have just finished crossing the red sea.* They get to the other side safely only to see the Egyptians being swallowed alive by the sea's mighty waves. How are they feeling at that moment? What do they see? How do they react? How do they show all of this through body movement and facial expressions?
- *The plagues...*  
One person can be pharaoh; others can be Egyptians who are affected by each of the plagues. How does it make them feel? What is the affect of each of the plagues? How does Pharaoh react to each of them? How does he harden his heart?
- *The four children...*  
Ask someone to read the Russian descriptions of each of the four children. What do they think about the four children? What are the aspects of the four children that they think should be illuminated? How can they physicalize the four children? How would they interact with each other based on who they are?
- *The Israelites enslaved in Egypt...*  
What did it feel like to be a slave in Egypt? What was working under Pharaoh like? How did the Israelites help or support each other when they were in slavery? How did Pharaoh rule over them?
- If you are looking for additional moments to add in you could include sections taken from Exodus. If the group is not familiar with these stories you can include a quick review of them. Or, bring a basic review of them and ask your translator to help you translate to the group.

### **Four Children.**

The four children are not categories that pigeonhole each of us in one role but identify four aspects of each us that emerge in different ways. Imagine in what way you are the wicked child, rebellious, critical, hutzpadik (OR silent, unable or unwilling even to ask a question) . Then ask anyone who will to share that aspects and that situation that evokes this role.

### **Ten Plagues**

Develop your own plagues of this year based on events that happened (Shawn Fields Meyer)

Recite order of plagues backwards.

**Bottled Plagues.** In Israel museum they took large glass containers and put ten in row and filled each with symbols of the ten plagues. For example, ping pong balls for hail and ketchup bottle for wine and plastic frogs etc.

### **Math Quiz and the 250 Plagues. Compute in your head:**

number of mothers + days of week + stars (in Echad Mi Yodeia) – tablets at Sinai =  
months of pregnancy x books of Torah x commandments at Sinai =

plagues X children – tribes =

rabbis in Bnai Brak + orders of Mishna – days of bris + number of animals mentioned in Had gadya =

**Plague Bag** (10-25 minutes interspersed within the Seder/small family group/group of children)  
Materials:

1 Large Bag

1 Container of red food-coloring (blood) Several toy frogs (frogs) Several small plastic insects (lice) A few animal masks (wild beasts) Picture of cow, crayons/markers (cattle disease) Tape and many circular pieces of white paper (boils) Many Styrofoam balls or cotton balls (hail) Several plastic grasshoppers (locusts) A few small pieces of cloth/bandanas (darkness) (slaying of the first born)

**Program:**

*When it comes time to speak about the plagues, take out the Plague Bag. There is something in the bag to be taken out to represent each plague. You may take the objects out yourself, or have a participant do it and make it into a guessing game, depending on time.*

Blood – Show the container of red food-coloring. If you are brave, pour it into a pitcher and fill the pitcher with water...you may also take a sip to show that the water did not taste like blood to the Israelites Frogs – Throw the toy frogs onto the table and let the participants play with them.

Lice – Drop the plastic insects into the hair of the participants and all over the table.

Wild Beasts – Have the participants wear the animal masks and make the sounds of their respective animals Cattle Pestilence – Allow participants to color in the picture of the cow (attached). They can add a quote for what they think a sick cow would say.

Boils – Have the participants tape pieces of paper onto themselves and onto others to signify the Egyptians having boils.

Hail – Throw the cotton/Styrofoam balls up into the air and let them hail down onto the participants.

Locusts – Remove the grasshopper toys and place them all over the table Darkness – Allow the participants to tie the bandana/cloth over each other's eyes, and let them experience darkness for a minute or so.

**Arami Oveid Avi Symposium**

Read the Biblical text that describes the life of immigrant. Ask someone who has been immigrant to retell the story and the feelings of beings uprooted and then becoming new comer.

**Buying Dufflebags for the Trip to a New Home**

In the spirit of "My Father was a Wandering Aramean,"we now do a drive before Passover to purchase duffle bags – proper suitcases for kids in foster care so that they would feel better going from place to place.

(Temple Micah in Washington, DC cited in Isa Aron's *Sacred Strategies* (p. 120))

**Make sounds** of signing and groaning. Half sigh or groan and half kvetch and then switch roles.  
(David Schneir)

Everyone write up their own definition of freedom or slavery and read them at each of signposts of the seder (*kadesh urhatz*) then stick it on map from Egypt to Jerusalem which is "freedom trail" with these 16 definitions. (Shawn Fields Meyer)

### **Freedom Quotations**

Include in the Seder or scatter on the tables for the participants to read when they want to.

#### **Freedom**

No human being is free who is not master of himself.

-Epictetus (Ancient Greek Philosopher)

There is no boredom like that which can afflict people who are free, and nothing else.

-Ralph Barton Perry

Praised be You who has not made me a slave.

-Rabbi Aha ben Jacob (Babylonian Talmud Scholar)

None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.

-Goethe (19<sup>th</sup> century German writer)

Freedom is taken, not given.

-Ahad Ha'Am (Zionist, 20<sup>th</sup> century thinker)

Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.

-Abraham Lincoln, 1859

Better to be a free bird than a captive king.

-Danish Proverb

No human is wholly free. One is a slave to wealth, or to fortune, or the laws, or the people restrain him from acting according to his will alone.

-Euripides (Ancient Greek playwright)

Who then is free? The wise who can command their passions, who fear not want, nor death, nor chains, firmly resisting their passions, who fear not want, nor death, nor chains, firmly resisting their appetites and despising the honors of the world, who rely wholly on themselves, whose angular points of character have all been rounded off and polished.

-Horace (Rome, 25 BCE)

The Merciful demands that your servant be your equal. You should not eat white bread, and he black bread; you should not drink old wine, and he new wine; you should not sleep on a featherbed and he on straw. Hence it was said, Whoever acquires a Hebrew slave acquires a master.

-Talmud

When is a man free? Not when he is driftwood on the stream of life,...free of all cares or worries or ambitions...He is not free at all—only drugged...To be free in action, in struggle, in undiverted and purposeful achievement, to move forward towards a worthy objective across a fierce terrain of resistance, to be vital and aglow in the exercise of a great enterprise—that is to be free, and to know the joy and exhilaration of true freedom. A man is free only when he has a errand on earth.

-Abba Hillel Silver (20<sup>th</sup> century Reform Rabbi and Zionist leader)

**Everyone must see themselves as if they went out of Egypt**

**Pass a round mirror** during "everyone is obligated to see oneself as if going out of Egypt or bring photo of ancestor and yourself and stick on to crowd of Jews leaving Egypt as if you and your ancestor were all among the 600,000 (Shawn Fields Meyer)

**Elijah's Cup.** Think of unanswered question in your life and then pour from Elijah's cup into your own as symbol of Elijah's answer. When he comes he will settle doubts (*teku = Tishbi yavo v'yitaretz kushiot*) Reb Zalman Schachter (2013)

**Ki Olam Hasdo.** Add to Hallel HaGadol your own blessings for which you are grateful and end together with refrain for God's Goodness is Forever. (Reb Zalman Schachter, 2013)

**Next Year in Jerusalem.**

Review how many times each participant has been in Jerusalem. Share a best memory.

**Ma'aser Sheni.** When is next trip. Note the Rabbis ruled that 10% of produce is for vacation pilgrimage in Jerusalem.

Make El Al paper airplanes

**Four Questions for Social Justice Today (Michael Lerner, Nevei Kodesh)**

*Discuss as a group or in pairs at the Seder table:*

1. **Egypt, "mitzrayim"** in Hebrew, comes from the word "*tzar*": the "narrow place," the constricted place. In what way are you personally still constricted? Are you able to see yourself as part of the unity of all being, a manifestation of God's love on earth? Are you able to overcome the ego issues that separate us from each other? Can you see the big picture, or do you get so caught in the narrow places and limited struggles of your own life that it's hard to see the big picture? What concrete steps could you take to change that?

**2. Faith in Change and Skepticism.** Do you believe that we can eventually eradicate wars, poverty, and starvation? Or do you believe that no one really cares about anyone but themselves, and that we will always be stuck in some version of the current mess? Or do you think that such a belief is, itself, part of what keeps us in this mess? If so, how would you suggest we spread a more hopeful message and deal with the cynicism and self-doubt that always accompanies us when we start talking about changing the world?

**3. Stories of Hope.** What experiences have you had that give you hope? Tell about some struggle to change something — a struggle that you personally were involved in — that worked. What did you learn from that?

**4. Taking the Initiative.** When the Israelites approached the Sea of Reeds, the waters did not split. It took a few brave souls to jump into the water. Even then, the waters rose up to their very noses, and only then when these brave souls showed that they really believed in God as the Force of Healing and Transformation did the waters split and the Israelites walked through. Have you known someone with that courage? When have you taken such a first step — did it open up the situation?

**Password** with Pesach phrases.

**Sentence completions** - *open ended value statements are a great tool to trigger discussions. Present a statement and then have guests around the seder table give their responses. Each response should be brief and spontaneous. Guests may pass if they wish.*

1. To me freedom is . . .
2. When I think of slavery, I I.
3. The opposite of freedom is . .
4. When I eat matzah, I . . .
5. Passover makes me think of
6. I am like a slave when . . .
7. I feel the most free when . . .
8. On Passover I am proud that . . .
9. If I could change one thing about Passover I would .
10. Today Moses would . . .
11. Slavery today is . . .

12. I wish the Jews in the wilderness had . . .
13. Something about Passover that really bothers me is
14. One hundred years from now Passover will be . . .
15. One place that I would really like to celebrate Passover is . . .
16. The animal that reminds me of freedom is . . .
17. The person in history that I would like to spend Passover with is .
18. If I could invite anyone in the world to my seder I would invite
19. Freedom tastes like . . .
20. Freedom smells like . . .
21. Freedom looks like . . .
22. The best thing about the seder is . . .
23. The seder is important because . . .

### **"Just-For-Fun" At the Seder** (from JEA Merkaz)

**Toasts** - Assign 4 different guests a Toast to coincide with the 4 cups of wine. They may be on one theme or 4 different themes or open-ended. Have a toast presented before each of the 4 cups of wine.

#### **A Question of Imagination**

*Write questions on cards and read (or delegate) at appropriate times during the seder.  
Encourage discussion.*

What would you take if you were leaving Egypt? What is your favorite Passover food? What is your favorite Passover song? What do you like best about Passover?

What are 4 questions you have about the world we live in today?

What evils plague our society today? (Ask at 10 plagues...some ideas AIDS, crime....)

What memories do you have of Passover when you were young?

What memories do you have of seders when you were young?

We live in a place and time where we are free. We are lucky to enjoy freedom here in America. What "freedoms" are we grateful to have?

### **Commercial**

- Assign one for family to design and write out or act out.
- Selling matzah, maror, macaroons, wine, or signing up to follow Moses out of Egypt.

### **Fives Senses**

Ask 5 guests to complete these sentences.

Slavery feels like \_\_\_\_\_  
Slavery sounds like \_\_\_\_\_  
Slavery looks like \_\_\_\_\_  
Slavery tastes like \_\_\_\_\_  
Slavery smells like \_\_\_\_\_

Ask 5 others at a later point to complete these sentences.

Freedom feels like \_\_\_\_\_  
Freedom sounds like \_\_\_\_\_  
Freedom looks like \_\_\_\_\_  
Freedom tastes like Freedom  
smells like \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Cards from [www.pjll.org](http://www.pjll.org)

The Jews had to build entire cities while they were slaves.  
Imagine you were Pharaoh.  
What other really hard jobs could you have given the Jews?

Ask some people at the table  
what is their favorite Seder memory.  
Why do they like that  
moment?

Pretend you are a lawyer and you are arguing with God that He is being  
unfair to the Egyptians and punishing them too much.  
What would your arguments be and how do you think  
God would respond? Pick someone to be God.

There will never be another Moses. But who do you think was  
the second greatest Jewish leader?  
Pick two people at the table to answer.

What do you like most about the Seder?  
You answer and choose one more person also to answer.

Ask someone to be a CNN reporter - covering "live"  
the exodus from Egypt as it is happening.

Pick someone to sing *Ma Nishtanah*- with their mouth closed.

Ask someone to be a frog

What plague would you least  
like to experience? Act it out.

There was a lot of crazy weather during the plagues  
(darkness, hail, blood in the Nile, etc.).

Ask someone to give a weather report for Egypt  
during that time

Lots of Jews were scared to leave Egypt with Moses.

Pick 2 people at the table and  
have one convince the other to leave.

Pick up a spoon and pretend it is a telephone.

Give it to someone at the table and tell them that  
Pharaoh is calling. What do they want to say to him.

Ask someone to be Pharaoh's daughter - trying to convince  
her father to "Let the Jews Go."

When we say "Next Year in Jerusalem" at the end of the Seder, what  
does that mean to you?

Which biblical personality would you like to invite to your Seder, and  
which famous modern day personality would you like him/her  
to sit next to?

IT THERE WERE A MACY'S PASSOVER PARADE, WHAT WOULD YOUR FLOAT  
LOOK LIKE? WHO WOULD RIDE ON IT?

Which member of the Seder would you  
assign to the following roles and why?

1. The wise child - the one who seeks depth and multiple answers
2. The wicked child - the one who debates and asks provocative questions to seek personal relevance to the traditional text
3. The simple child - the one who listens in wonder
4. The child who doesn't know to ask - but wants to experience

Did you know...Moses, Aaron and Miriam were siblings. Instead of another biblical story about sibling rivalry, the Passover tale highlights how these siblings used their strengths to support the others' weaknesses. When has a sibling or family member filled in for you at a moment of weakness?

At the seder there is a Cup for Elijah (wine) and some pour a Cup for Miriam (water). Who would you honor with a toast and with what would you fill this cup?

How would you complete the sentence:

"We will know it is the Messianic era w h e n . . . "

If you were a breadcrumb in your house, where would you hide over Pesach?

Pick a person from your favorite TV show.

Which of the four children (i.e. wise, wicked, simple and does not *even* know how to ask) is that person and why?

After you spilt off some wine to remember the Egyptians who drowned, spill off some saltwater, and ask yourself:

""Which countries have **populations** for whom we need to shed tears and remain vigilant?"

## **Haroset Around the World - Compiled by Susan Klingman**

Prepare multiple recipes of haroset and ask each food maven to taste it and identify all its ingredients:

*There are Many Different Kinds of Charoset - Try a new one this year...*

### **Israeli:**

Finely chop or put into a blender. 1 peeled and cored apple  
5 sliced bananas 10 pitted dates 1/2 cup nuts  
juice and grated rind of 1/2 lemon juice and grated rind of 1/2 orange add 1/2 cup dry red wine  
and 1 teaspoon cinnamon.  
Mixture will be loose - add enough matzah meal to achieve desired consistency. Add sugar or honey to taste.

### **Moroccan:**

2 cups walnut pieces  
1 cup blanched slivered almonds , 25 pitted dates  
10 large brown dried figs (calimyra) 20 large apricots  
1/2 cup shelled pistachios 1/4 cup sweet red wine ground cinnamon  
Put nuts and dried fruit in a food processor or blender and finely grind together. Mix in just enough wine to make a soft paste that is malleable. Form into 1 inch balls and sprinkle lightly with cinnamon. Store in refrigerator' for up to two weeks. Serve at room temperature. (Makes 6 dozen balls)

### **Askenazi Eastern European/American:**

1/2 cup mixed almonds and walnuts - chopped  
1 large chopped dessert apple 1 generous teaspoon cinnamon enough wine to bind ingredients  
mix all together

### **Spicy Charoset**

3 stalks celery, diced,  
2 large apples, peeled and diced 1 can crushed pineapple  
1 cup walnuts, large chunks 1/2 cup mayonaise  
2 tablespoons each lemon juice, sugar  
2 tbs white prepared horseradish (or red)

### **Yemenite:**

6 large brown (calimyra) figs 6 pitted dates  
2 tablespoons sesame seeds  
1 teaspoon honey (or to taste) 1/2 teaspoon ginger  
1/8 teaspoon ground coriander seeds pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)  
Finely grind figs and dates in a food processor, blender, or grinder to make a firm, sticky paste. Mix in sesame seeds, honey, and spices to taste.

### **Turkish;**

Chop 1 jaffa orange and 1/2 pound pitted dates. Add 1/2 cup sugar Cook 20 minutes over a low heat. stirring occasionally.

Stir in 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon and 2 tablespoons wine or brandy. Refrigerate 4 hours or overnight. Serve at room temperature.

**Egyptian:**

16 ounces raisins

8 ounces pitted dates

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans Place fruit in a bowl with water to cover. Let stand for 1 hour.

Add the sugar and whirl in a blender or processor, a few spoonfuls at a time with a little of the soaking liquid. Transfer to a heavy saucepan and simmer over a low heat until fruits are cooked and liquid absorbed, (about 20 minutes.) Remove from heat. cool and sprinkle with nuts.

Spanish or Portuguese: 1/2 cup of pitted dates 2 cups sliced apples

1/2 cup dried apricots or raisins

1/2 cup chopped walnuts or almonds 2/3 tablespoon sweet red wine

Put apples, dates, and apricots or raisins in a pot with enough water to cover. Cook until tender enough to mash. Mix together until well blended. Add nuts and wine. Refrigerate.

**Fig: Puree:**

1 8 ounce package dried figs

1 8 ounce package dried apricots 1/2 cup brown sugar

1/4 cup water

1 1/2 teaspoons grated orange rind 1/3 cup orange juice

Cook over medium-low heat. stirring. until thick Cool.

**Middle Eastern**

1/2 cup pinenuts

2 hard-boiled mashed egg yolks 1/4 cup chopped almonds

1/3 cup sugar 1 apple

juice and grated rind of 1 lemon 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon allspice 1/2 cup raisins

sweet wine to moisten

Chop fruit together, add seasonings, yolks and wine. This charoset is traditionally shaped into small balls. Add matzah meal to thicken if necessary.

**Sephardic**

5/4 cup dark Muscat raisins 1 pound pitted dates

1 orange peeled and pitted 1 apple peeled and cored sweet wine to moisten mix all together

**Greek Charoset**

20 large dates, chopped 3/4 cup walnuts, ground 1 cup raisins, chopped

1/2 cup almonds, chopped trace of grated lemon peel

Combine fruit and nuts. Add wine to make desired consistency.

mix all together and refrigerate

## Infusing Meaning into the Passover Seder (2014)

By Michele Alperin/JNS.org

As the intersection of family, Jewish memory, and the passions of contemporary politics and society, the Passover seder is said to be the most celebrated annual Jewish event in the United States. But it is **not always easy** to make all seder attendees feel the Haggadah's mandate that in every generation, each individual should feel personally redeemed from Egypt.

The seder's uniqueness is what makes running a successful seder so challenging, suggests Noam Zion, research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute and coauthor of two haggadot. It is at the same time a very **intellectual venture**, modeled on the Greek symposium, and a reflection of the **priestly service**, with ceremonial foods eaten in the proper order at the right time. Yet the leader of any seder is the head of the household where that particular seder is being held, and that leader may or may not be an expert.

**"You need imagination, emotion, drama** [to lead a seder]; you need someone who has gone to drama school, studied in a **rabbinical yeshiva**, and knows the rabbinic laws and how to run a priestly seder, and you have to do that with people of all different ages and different attitudes," says Zion. **"It's almost a 'mission impossible' to balance all those elements."**

Zion says his father, Rabbi Moses Sachs, imparted two lessons about running seders: the importance of meshing the traditional and contemporary, and the need for sensitivity to a seder's particular audience. Rabbi Arthur Waskow—director of the Philadelphia-based [Shalom Center](#), whose stated mission is "to reunify political action and spiritual search"—remembers serious, leftwing seders with parents who were socialists and union activists. Although he still participated in seders after leaving home, his central identity was as a civil rights and anti-war activist.

Then Waskow experienced a sequence of events around the seder that changed his life. In 1968, when Washington, DC, was under martial law in the wake of the riots following Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death, walking home from the office to get ready for the seder meant walking past the army, Waskow recalls.

"There was a jeep with a machine gun pointing up my block," he says. "My *kishkes* (insides), not my brain, began saying, 'This is Pharaoh's army; and you're going home to do the seder.'" "For the first time in my life, the seder was not just serious; it was explosive," Waskow adds. "It was like discovering a volcano in your backyard that had not only been dormant, but that you did not know existed."

Later that year, disheartened by the murder of U.S. Sen. Robert Kennedy and the events surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention, Waskow turned again to the seder. "I felt driven to sit down with the haggadah given to me when I was 13, with graphics by Saul Raskin, in one hand, and in the other King, Thoreau, Emanuel

Ringelbloom (the diarist of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising), the black slave rebellions of the 1830s and '40s, Gandhi, John Brown... I made them into an argument among themselves; I constructed an argument about violence and nonviolence and that became the heart of 'The Freedom Seder' (a haggadah Waskow published in 1970)," he says.

For Rabbi Barbara Penzner of Temple Hillel B'nai Torah in West Roxbury, Mass., seders have changed at different stages in her life. The seders her family shared with another family were "very homey, comforting, and welcoming," with each father leading to his strength, one more traditional and her own more socially active. After Penzner met her husband, Brian Rosman, things changed. "We wanted more discussion and less connection to the literal reading of the haggadah," she says. The couple, therefore, started to ask **each invitee to take charge of one part of the seder**. "It was a **potluck meal** and a **potluck seder**; because we didn't have kids, we would be arguing well into the night," she says.

Things changed again when Penzner had children. "Once you have kids, you can't argue on the same adult level, and you can't count on them sitting at the table for a long period of time," she says. "**At each stage as our kids grew, we adapted our seder.**"

According to Noam Zion, **the seder ritual went astray when it "became a public reading of a sacred text."**

**"The seder is supposed to be a series of oral activities: telling stories, asking questions, answering questions, having discussions, along with ritual activities," he says.**

In fact, Zion is fine with skipping the haggadah's long midrash (homiletic stories meant to resolve problems in the interpretation of difficult biblical passages) that begins with "My father was an Aramean." He claims that it is not a necessary read, but rather "**a model of the kind of rabbinic discussion** you yourself were supposed to have" at the seder. From their experience running seders over the years, Zion, Waskow, and Penzner offer a number of suggestions for molding a successful seder night:

- **Pick the best guests** you can, because you need **allies who share your goal of having an interesting seder**, says Zion. He notes that family members who don't want to be there can be a big drag. **Inviting curious Christians, he says, can spice things up with new questions and put "deadbeat relatives" on their best behavior.**
- Always assign roles to at least three or four people before the seder. "**Pick the people who are not the most knowledgeable but the most energetic, dramatic, opinionated,**" says Zion. A politically interested person might talk about contemporary struggles for freedom, a storyteller might perform paper-bag dramatics, an artist might discuss artistic renditions of the four children, and a good cook might bring lots of hors d'oeuvres to put out at the beginning of the seder, so that there are no complaints about hunger.
- Don't have the same person planning the seder and serving the meal, says Penzner. It's worth paying someone to help out.

- Plan the timing of the seder well, Penzner says. Know when you want to end, and get to the meal in time for that. If you want to include the post-meal parts of the haggadah, you need to stop the meal early enough so that people don't leave.
- Encourage questioning. The ritual "four questions" are just a model. For little children, suggests Penzner, hang matzot from the ceiling with crepe paper, or shape sticky Sephardic *haroset* into pyramids. Penzner also likes to give out **chocolate chips to anyone who asks a good question.**
- Make sure the seder reflects the participants: If you are bringing young children to a seder that is adult focused, Zion suggests, you should ask the host for a 10-15 minute **slot to do something meaningful for the children.** With small children, you may want to move the first part of the seder from the table to couches and the floor. "That gave us and families with babies room to go in and out and participate as much as they could," says Penzner.
- Include activities that get everyone involved, like creating a **second seder plate.** Zion suggests one plate filled with objects brought by invitees that represent the most important thing that has shaped their Jewishness. Waskow shares the suggestion of Martha Hausman to have a **"freedom plate" where "people bring some physical object from their own lives that represents freedom for them,** and each person gets to lift his or her own object and explain it." Zion also recommends filling **Elijah's cup together—via the Ropshitzer Rebbe, he explains that as each participant pours in a little wine, they can share their hopes and dreams for "next year in Jerusalem" and for a better world.**