

OHALAH and Aleph Smicha Student Passover Seder “Best Practices”

Dinner & Miriam’s cup of sweetness

Two from me: Leana

Don't move to the dining table until dinner/shulhan aruch. It allows for movement, creativity and fluidity through some of the most important parts of the seder. It also allows children to fidget naturally without disruption.

For Miriam’s cup of sweet water: add sugar to still water and have everyone offer something sweet from their neshamas to add to the tears from the salt water ritual.

Dinner & creating more personal and accessible questions for reflection

One idea is that we sub-divide the meal and serve it throughout the seder. That way, we can keep talking for 4-5 hours (and we do!)

Another is that ask personal questions which relate to the seder, but to which everyone can have an answer. Questions like this include "what's your best /worst memory of a seder?" "What does freedom on a physical level feel like to you? (and then ask for communal, emotional, spiritual, etc.)

Final technique that has worked wonders for us, is to always be sure that whoever is at the seder, the first couple of questions are both EASY and are answered Around the table by every single person. That way, even the shy people get a chance to speak up, which usually helps them participate more comfortably later on, too.

Hope this helps!

Aura Ahuvia

Plague in a Box & “Fire and Brimstone” Dayenu

For a few years, my brother-in-law did the “plague-in-a-box” game, and it was a riot for all gathered...not very sublime...but a blast, especially for the kids..

And, then, we always recite the English of ‘dayenu’ in our best Baptist minister imitation. Fire and Brimstone voices and cadences...oh, yea! [Rabbi Jan Salzman](#)

A real seder journey to the desert, floating Moses doll, Broadway tunes, hidden rubber frogs, instruments, dividing up the maggid section, hand made midrash for kids

Being in Las Vegas, I once held a seder, where as soon as Maggid began, I announced that everyone had two minutes to gather their belongings and get out. I gave each participant a pith helmet and a bota (of wine or grape juice) and had a bus ready to whisk them to the desert, where we hiked, eventually crossing a wadi and ending on a

rise, allowing us to see "Egypt" (the Luxor Hotel) on the horizon. The "living" of the y'tziat Mitzrayim was unforgettable.

Another experiential Seder, including paper bag dramatics, a "Rugrat" doll floating in a basket in our pond by the front door, and people wandering across the yard.

We've had a "Broadway" Seder, where the story is told through Broadway melodies.

At one of my son's Sederim, prior to the Seder, the kids searched for little rubber frogs which had been strewn across the large yard of my son's home. By the time the seder began, they had run all over the yard and were ready to settle in.

We always have musical instruments so the singing is heartfelt and joyful. My sister often removes the chairs, and fills the room with pillows...everyone reclines.

The maggid section has also been done by dividing up the sections and having groups tackle interpreting each section.

We've given the kids playdough, or sugar cubes, to allow them to create an interpretation of some aspect of the story, which is then displayed after the meal, but before the search for the afikoman.

Does that help?

--Yocheved

Iranian custom of green onion smacking, costuming, looking at the moon, elaborate karpases

Chava,

I can also share some ideas:

1. a Sephardi custom of hitting each other with spring onions for 'dai dayenu'
2. having everyone dress up as if they were leaving Egypt
3. going outside to look at the moon at Eliyahu and realize it's the same moon...
4. obviously the orange on the table...
5. Having different karpas snacks out to munch on before the meal - like veggie sticks

Good luck,

Gabbigsshalom@yahoo.com

Exploring Personal Mitzrayim

We have been following R. Arthur's ideas about asking people what their Mitzrayim and what their liberation story each year is. It takes time, but is hugely meaningful and completely inclusive.

Rain

Questions (Hebrew) to explore

Try <http://notes.co.il/yair/30400.asp> - Dr. Yair Caspi's Pessach Questionnaire might be of interest...

Pray for peace,

Simcha Daniel

Daniel Burstyn

Kibbutz Lotan, Israel

<http://www.kibbutzlotan.com>

Ha Lachma Anya in Lingua Franca

We ask everyone who knows another language to recite the ha lachma anya in their language, since it was meant to be recited in the vernacular. This can be very powerful, at one of our seders we heard it in Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, French and finally German, which brought tears to everyone's eyes. We also ask what/who is your personal pharaoh, your mitzrayim, and what represents your freedom... tshuka@mind.net

What are you packing for the journey and what are you leaving behind? Room décor and setting

This is all great! Thanks everyone. Here's my two cents worth:

I've asked participants to bring a bag - a sack of some sort - with the things in it that they're taking with them out of Mitzrayim and why. Part of this journey also includes the telling of what they are leaving behind. Some bring lists instead - either way, it works out really beautifully, especially when we are blessed to witness transformation as it arises.

Ori Har presented this idea to me when we did a seder together in Israel - even the Israeli's present really dug it (2006)! The funniest was from a 7 year old who said "he's leaving all of his homework behind!" Hmmmmm!?

I also like folks to arrive early and really feel a part of putting the seder together. They usually are charged with the crudités and putting the ingredients for and on the Seder plate.

I prefer to hold the seder in the living room, where it's infinitely more relaxed. I learned that from R' Ruth Gan (Eden) Kagan. I once embellished my living room with wisps of cloth draped from the ceiling to give the room a tent-like feel. That was super duper cool and really set a beautiful tone.

I also like to bar-b-que for Pesach - korban-y-ish def6@earthlink.net

300 Ways to Ask the Four questions

<http://dev.brochins.com/judaica-search.php?search=300+languages&submit=Search>

300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions

I used this last year! I played sections of about 20 of the tracks for my guests and had them enter their best guesses as to which language it was on the index cards provided. Some were nostalgic (Yiddish, Ladino, Polish); others touched a few guests far from home (Turkish, Russian), and a few were truly amazing, such as African click language. But the most memorable ones were just hysterical... Shakespearean, Valley Girl, and best of all authentic Klingon. (You wouldn't believe some of the guesses on *that* one... to bad Hazzan Jack wasn't there to enlighten us!) I highly recommend it :-)

Blessings, Bella

Personalizing the Questions & creating a sea of reeds to cross

In Strassfeld's The Jewish Holidays, Reb Zalman suggests:

"Ask yourself" What are your four questions? Your four questions about Judaism? If I want to know something this night, what is it I really want to know? Why is it different? Life, I mean; why is it different from what I expected?"

As far as our seder, my daughter, now 13, insists on continuing a tradition we started when she was little, which is to create a sea of reeds with crepe paper stretched across a doorway (blue and white of course) and tearing through, led by the children and adults with tambourines and shakers, singing a song called O Lord Deliver Me. (If you'd like a copy let me know and I'll record it and send along)

Blessings,

Mark

Bingo seder card

A "Bingo" card for the Order of the Seder. Everyone gets one and places raisins or chocolate chips on the 14 steps. You eat them off as you move through the Seder. My cousins have done this forever and I am bringing it to the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center Seder this year.

A Seder is not complete anymore without that card.

Take care.

Andrea Foster, Ph.D.
ALEPH rabbinic student
www.yoninatorahseed.com

Dolls Leaving Egypt

Ariel takes all her dolls and stuffed animals and lines them up to leave Egypt. They then enter the split sea, and then dance with Miriam (that's Ariel) on the other side.

Yafa

Rabbanit Malka of Trisk

From Reb Leah Novick
Dear Chevre:

In the process of researching the life of Rabbanit Malka of Trisk* - known as Malkele die Triskerin (daughter of the Reb Avraham the Trisker Maggid)

I read a story about her lavish Passover seders which featured wonderful musicians and food. Also on Pesach, she wore a gold crown her father had given her.

Malkele has a special door built for Eliahu ha 'Navi that was only opened once a year. But the main event was the fact that she herself drank "Kos Eliahu" !

For some years I have been telling her story at our Passover Seder, and encouraging the guests to feel their prophetic abilities and drink to that ability (or pass Elijah's cup)

Below is the fuller version of her story and the suggested Seder ritual

MALKELE DIE TRISKERIN GOOD COMPANY FOR YOUR SEDER

Malkele, the Rebbe of Trisk was the daughter of Rabbi Avrohom of Trisk (who was born in 1806-died the 2nd of Tammuz, 5749/1889) and Rachel Twersky. Malkele was one of nine children (six daughters -all of whom go nameless in the Jewish encyclopedias - and three sons whose names are usually given) Since her mother seems to have died young, it is not clear if they were all children of Rachel. Reb Avraham, the author of the commentary entitled "Magen Avraham" was one of the eight sons of Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl, son of Menachem Nachim, the first great rebbe of Chernobyl, and the author of "Ha Meir Eynaim".

Her grandfather, Reb Mordechai, realizing that his domain could not sustain eight Rebbes, is supposed to have sent each son to a different location in the Ukraine to do their community work. He kept his gifted daughter Hana Hava, a woman reputed to be inspired by the Shekhinah, close to him in Chernobyl, where she gave advise and healings. While there are stories about Hana Havah's holiness, we are not told if she was married or single.

One wonders if Malkele learned from her aunt or from observing the male members of her family how to conduct herself as Rebbe. After her husband Efraim passed away, leaving her with two sons to support, she began conducting public meals- serving the poor twice a day - and giving advise and blessings to Trisk chasidim. While Chasidic histories mention her brothers as inheriting the court, it is clear that she too had followers. What is not clear is whether she actually conducted prayer services or left that to male members of her community. Also we do not know her views on the modernizing "Haskalah"/enlightenment movement which her father opposed.

Stories about her say that she loved music and attracted wonderful musicians to her court, especially for holidays when she had a choir as well. Passover was rumored to be one of her favorite holidays, and the time when she sported a solid gold crown inlaid with precious jewels, that she is supposed to have received as gift from her father. Malkele's father Reb Avrohom was rumored to have lived in a sumptuos manner and entertained many guests. Since he reputedly enjoyed luxuries this would explain the gold crown.

One of the major art pieces that the Trisker Rebbe was known for was a solid gold Chanukah menorah which had carvings of Russian cossacks who emerged to sing Maoz Tsur ! This massive Chanukiah, left to one of Malka's brothers was stolen once during the Czar's regime and recovered only to be confiscated during the Bolshevik revolution. So far as we know the famous menorah was never seen again,.

On Passover, escorted by her sons, Malkele the Rebbe of Trisk, would emerge wearing the crown to her splendid Seders which featured the most talented musicians and included waiters at the tables. Most outstanding though was a special door for Elijah she had built, which was opened only once a year. And, after inviting the Prophet in she drank the cup of Elijah herself !

Although we have no birthdate or yahrzeit for this amazing Rebbe, her association with the Passover seder is a natural and her minhag of drinking Elijah's cup (still shocking even to modern Jews) is a custom suited to contemporary thinking that each of carries some of the prophetic energy.

Reflections for the Passover Seder Table.
Malkele die Triskerin and Elijah's cup

Explain Elijah's traditional cup of wine and/or the contemporary feminist custom of setting aside a special water goblet in honor of Miriam the Prophetess. Miriam is praised in the legends for watching over Moses as he was floated down the Nile River. She is also associated with the miraculous well of water (formed by God at the beginning of the creation) which accompanied the Israelites through the desert years, until her death.

At the Passover Seder table, if you have a large group. ask them to arrange themselves in dyads and talk about what or who they consider "prophetic" in a modern context. (In a smaller gathering just go around the table, sharing.) It would be especially valuable if the guests would be willing to identify the prophetic qualities in themselves and each other.

Complete the exercise by asking the guests to present their insights to the larger group and then drink the third cup of wine (or grape juice) in honor of the quality of prophecy, as well as the personalities we honor as "Prophets".

Suggested music:

Eliahu Ha Navi -traditional

Miriam Ha Neviah - new words to traditional tune

Ani Ha Navi - Shefa Gold

Listen Closely for the Breaking of the Matza & eat afikomen in silence

From R David Zaslow

learned this from reb shlomo

1) during breaking of middle matzah everyone is really really silent. listen to the break and feel the brokenness of every broken heart, every broken family, every broken peace

2) during eating of afikoman, total silence. almost communion like silence. eating the hidden half that only our children can return to us. eating the hidden parts of life that i never realized were so important before this moment. =

Co-creating Elijah's cup

Dear Ones,

Given our traditional understandings of the implications of Elijah's presence at the Seder table, and of our sensibility that in the new paradigm 'Mashiach ' comprises a horizontal and egalitarian awareness, when we each embrace the consciousness of unity, kindness and justice, maschiach is present: the world will become who we are becoming.

So for a number of years I've asked folks to fill Cos Eliyahu with a little wine from each of our cups. This is our commitment to each do our part in bringing the Age of Peace now, in our time. As E's cup is passed around the table, each person pauses, and reflects for a moment on one's willingness and commitment to be part of this process, part of the healing, part of the solution. Personal specific kavvanot regarding one's commitment can also be expressed at this time.

Blessings, Andy G.

A Complete Passover Play in 7 Parts

From Bob Freedman:

1

Directions - Appoint someone to be director. Appoint someone else to be narrator. The narrator might read the action, or might simply announce the content of the scene. Use your imagination. Use the spoken dialogue written and/or make up your own. Don't be too serious.

Scene 1 (after reading about 4 children p. 26)

Moses is born. One morning his mother and his sister Miriam put him in a little boat and float him in the river. Mother says to Miriam, "If we keep the baby the Egyptians will come and kill him. Maybe this way we can save him." They hide among the river reeds to see what is going to happen. Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe with her maids. They are playing catch. A maid misses, and goes a little farther into the water. Moses is cooing and googling in his little boat. The maid hears him, sees him, picks up the baby and brings him to Pharaoh's daughter. The daughter oohs and aahs and says, "What a cute baby. It looks like an Israelite baby. OOOH I always wanted my own pet Israelite. I am going to keep it." Miriam appears and bargains for her mother to be the nursemaid. All humans depart happily for the palace, leaving the river and the rustling river reeds chuckling to each other about strange humans.

Characters:

Mother

Miriam

baby Moses

Pharaoh's daughter

daughter's attendants fawning and cooing.

rustling river reeds

2

Scene 2 (after song about Building Cities - p. 29)

Moses walks out of the palace one fine day. He sees Hebrew slaves working, and has a blinding moment of self-realization. "O my God," he says, "I am an israelite. I can't let this happen." He sees an evil Egyptian taskmaster beating a helpless Hebrew slave, loses his temper, kills the taskmaster with a single karate chop to the neck, and runs.

Characters:

Moses

Egyptian taskmaster

lots of slaves, some hard at work, others standing around in the time- honored manner of road crews everywhere.

3

Moses and three other shepherds are drinking weak beer at lunch time out in the desert. Their flocks are hanging around, bleating and happily munching dry desert sagebrush. Moses finishes his drink, burps, and gets up to visit a nearby rock. Behind the rock he sees a BURNING BUSH. He comes back to the other shepherds to tell them. They look at the bush but are not impressed and walk off. Moses however stays behind to marvel.

God speaks out of the burning bush, telling Moses to take off his shoes and Moses does so. God tells Moses to go free the Israelites. Moses refuses twice. The third time God gets angry and orders Moses. Moses backs off, shaking his head and forgetting his shoes. Embarrassed he runs back to get them but the bush is no longer burning. Moses walks away very confused.

Characters:

Moses

Shepherds

happy sheep eating and bleating

rocks sizzling in the noon sun

a burning bush

God

4

Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh and his attendant magicians in the palace. Moses cries in a loud voice: "Let my people go." Pharaoh says, "Not so fast. Who is this god you serve? How do I know how powerful he is?" Moses answers Pharaoh's questions and throws down his staff which becomes a large hungry anaconda. The magicians go into a huddle, then begin to chant loud magic language. They throw down their staffs and soon there are lots of snakes on the floor. Moses' snake eats all the others. The first ones he gets down easily but by the last two he is full and gets bad indigestion. Pharaoh laughs heartily but nervously. He says, "Very impressive, but uh, no deal." He dismisses Moses, who exits with Aaron. Out side the door Moses turns to Aaron and says, "What do we do now?"

Characters:

Moses

Aaron

Pharaoh

magicians muttering and mumbling arcane incantations

large hungry anaconda

some lesser snakes

slaves to fan Pharaoh and keep off the flies

palace walls

courtiers fawning and posing

5

Short plague scenes:

Plague of boils

Teenagers were very hard hit by this plague. They all got bad cases of acne. As they are standing around at recess, a man appears selling jars of Sure Cure Boil Oil. He claims it works in one hour. They all buy a jar and the stranger leaves quickly. They open the jars and realize that inside is only toothpaste. Angrily they chase after the con man.

Characters: students, con man

Plague of locusts:

Locusts come and devour all the plants in sight. They make loud chewing noises, smack their lips, burp, complain about how little food is left after the hail.

Plants complain, "I wish I had insect repellent. I hate to be eaten alive." Other plants reply, "This is what it's like to be a plant. You just get eaten. Still, it's good to be rooted."

Farmer cries oy vey, oy vey

Characters:

Lots of locusts (children make good locusts) Plants, Farmer

Plague of Darkness

In the Egyptian neighborhood people are walking around like Egyptians. They bump into each other, saying nice things about pardon me, or nasty things about how dark it is. A blind person moves easily through them, being used to it.

Meanwhile, over in the Israelite neighborhood, people comment about what a bright sunny day it is out here in the country, and complain about the pall of smog that seems to hang over the city recently. The same blind person comes on stage, sits down and basks in the sun.

Characters:

Egyptians walking like Egyptians bumping into each other

Israelites happy in the sunshine, a blind person with a cane

6

It's the night of Passover in ancient Israel. Two families have gathered for the feast of the lamb. The lamb is served and all the diners except Judah are ready to take the first bite. He's the rebellious son. He stands up and complains.

Judah: I don't want any. It's red meat. I don't like the taste It has a face, I'm a vegan. It was innocent. It's just a silly old custom. etc, etc.

One woman (his mother?): But you have to eat it. Otherwise, you won't be a citizen of Israel this year. All citizens, all Jews must eat it. You only need a little taste.

A man (his father?): We want you to be part of us. It's a memory of the blood Moses and our ancestors smeared on the doorposts the night when God loosed the angel of death on the Egyptians. Any one who didn't have lamb blood smeared in their door posts that night was, well you know the story.

Judah's sister: Judah, don't forget that we eat it with bitter herbs and matsah. Take some of this bitter sauce we made. In fact, take a lot of it. I'll cut you a very small piece. Then you won't even taste it.

Judah's brother (He's the wise child who always knows everything and is pious.) We also eat the lamb to remember when the great temple was still in our midst. We'll never, ever forget that.

Others speak up: "Don't forget the ketchup." "Someone pass him the mustard." "I'll get the mint jelly and some steak sauce."

Judah: But I'm a vegan!

Another speaker: Vegan Shmegan. Be a vegan the other 364 days, 23 hours and 59 minutes of the year. Hurry up and eat. This seder is a little too long already.

They cut Judah a tiny piece. He pours ketchup, mustard, steak sauce, mint jelly on it, puts it on a matsah. They all lift their bites to their mouths and eat. Judah makes a sour face. The others say "YUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!"

Characters: Judah, father, mother, sister, brother, others.

7

Standing at the edge of the sea, the Israelites see the Egyptians with grim faces coming across the plain. They cry out to Moses to help them. Moses is puzzled and asks God what to do. God tells him, "Don't talk to me, raise your magic staff." Moses does this and nothing happens. One heroic Israelite, Nachshon, walks into the water. When he gets up to his neck the water parts, and the Israelites walk through walls of water. Cheer leader fish swimming in the water on either side yell things like "Go, Jews, Go." "You can do it, you can do it, you can, shalom."

Reuven and Shimon drag their feet in the mud. They can't see the miracle around them. Other people say to them, "Isn't this incredible? Isn't it miraculous?" Reuven and Shimon can only make sour comments to each other like, "It stinks of dead fish here. I hate mud season. Look at all the old chariot tires people have thrown in here. It looks like a trash heap." Just as they walk out onto the far shore the sea rushes in. The Egyptians follow and drown as the sea covers them. The Israelites rejoice, dancing and singing.

Characters:

terrified Israelites

grim Egyptians driving chariots

Moses

God

fearless Nachshon

waving water walls

Cheerleader Fish

Reuven and Shimon

8 Matsa and Maror

Narrator: Moses tells the Israelites to get ready to go, tomorrow! The women begin kneading their dough to make bread for the journey. The little yeast cells are eager to get to work. They talk to each other very excited:

Yeast cells: Come on guys, let's rise. Push 'em up! Push 'em up! Waaaaay up. Hey, some yeastie give me a hand with this big wheat molecule over here. "Bubble, bubble bubble bubble! What a gas!

Narrator: Suddenly God speaks.

God: Stop rising. It is time for the Israelites to leave. They must put the bread on their backs unleavened, and leave Egypt.

Narrator: The yeasts are sad.

Yeast cells: AWWW! Just when we were starting to get high, God spoils all the fun."

(Two matsas come out walking bent over. Mother, father and child pick them up (pretend!), put them on their backs.)

Mother and Father: Come on. Moses says we have to hurry. Let's carry the unrisen bread.

(They start to walk, carrying the unrisen bread.)

Child: May I please have some bread to eat? I'm hungry.

Mother: Yes, here is some of the bread that didn't have time to rise.

Child (takes a bite, chews a little): Ugh! It's so dry and hard to chew, it reminds me of slavery." (Takes another bite and talks as if with his/her mouth full.) "Whatsa matter with this? Whatsa matter? (Mix up the words so it sounds like "matsa.")

Mother: Yes. We'll call it matsa.

Characters:

God

Yeast cells

Unleavened loaves

Mother, Father, Child

Narrator: It's March. Father planted the horseradish plant last summer and it has been growing throughout the winter. Father wants the horseradish to be really bitter this year, so each day he goes out and talks ugly, hateful talk to it.

Horseradish Plant: Oh No! Here he comes again. I'm really sick of this. I get abuse every day. It makes me really hate everything and everybody.

Father: You worthless plant. You call yourself a root? You belong below the ground, in the DIRT! Even the moles won't touch you. Nobody likes you. Go eat a worm, as if YOU could even catch one. HA!

Other Plants: Why does he get all the bad treatment? He must have done something wrong. Let's stay away. (They move a little apart.)

Horseradish plant (snarls): Shut up you sniveling succulents. Just wait. I'll get him.

Narrator: At the seder table, the family is about to eat the maror.

(Mother, father, guests, children are around the table. Horseradish root is in the middle.)

Father: Let's see if it really is true, that if we mistreat someone they get bitter.

Mother: When I made the horseradish sauce from that root I had to open the windows in the kitchen, the smell was so strong.

Father: Everyone lift up a piece of maror. (They all lift up some maror)

All: Blessed are you God, who commands us to eat a bitter herb.

(They all take a bite. They gag. Tears come from their eyes. They cough. Some grab for a drink of water, etc.)

Children: That's too bitter! You really overdid it this time, Dad. This is not safe for us to eat.

All: This is what slavery must have been like for us.

Horseradish: Revenge is bitter for them and sweet for me. (Shouts) Rights for Roots. Rights for Roots! Rights for Roots! Rights for Roots! Rights for Roots! (until the rest shut him up)

Characters:
Horseradish root
Other plants.

Father

Mother

Children and guests (Could be the same people as the other plants)

Narrator