

Resource suggestions for families and teachers (extended)

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These are suggestions and ideas based on our "300 Ways to Enhance Your Seder" workshops, given to venues all over the East coast. If you'd like to host this engaging presentation for your temple or social group, please contact us via our WhyIsThisNight.com website. Sign up for our "Passover Alerts" on that site also – fun, engaging insightful ideas for seder participants of all ages. At the end of this document, you'll find some top resource sites.

Remember: the best guidelines for the seder experience are to Make It Real, Make It Personal, and Make It Fun.

Activities / Encouraging Participation

MAKE YOUR OWN PLAGUES

Create ten paper bags, each bag to be opened when the Ten Plagues are read. Small children positively squirm with delight as they imagine what's in each small sack. They won't be disappointed if you use, for example:

- Squishy eyeballs for boils
- Fake grasshoppers (rubber/plastic) for vermin
- Tiny plastic skeletons for the slaying of the first born
- And, certainly the most popular, Ping-Pong balls for hail (one parent said their children promptly threw across the table at each other throughout the Seder). These "bagged plagues" became a family tradition, and each year their children eagerly anticipated what represented each plague.

PLAGUES, VERSION 2

Act out the 10 Plagues. One mother suggests what worked well for her kids:

- For Cattle Disease, we have a dozen large plastic cows, covered in band-aids and bandages, and distributed from a basket.
- For Boils, we give each guest three round band-aids, which they stick on various and interesting places on their bodies. We've also distributed a sheet of red round stickers (from Staples) which also get stuck on bodies.
- For Hail, the children stand on the balcony over the dining area and pelt us with ping-pong (or cotton) balls.
- For Locusts, we have a basket of plastic grasshoppers that one child passes around.
- For Darkness, we turn off all the lights and spend a few moments experiencing the dark. We've also distributed sunglasses to everyone.
- Our son (and the other first-born children) is quite pleased to (very dramatically) act out the Death Of The First Born. We put the props in baskets so that each child is able to participate in handing them out at the appropriate time.

PLAGUES (MATZAH BOXES)

Prepare plague boxes for each child. Wrap matzah boxes in paper that contains hieroglyphics or tomb images. Put in each box:

- Sticky red hand (Blood).
- Frog with popping eyes (Frogs).
- Nasty looking plastic bug whose guts come out when squeezed (Lice).
- Wild beast finger puppet (Wild Beasts).
- Wind up cow to die and walk off the table (Pestilence).
- Boils made from clay and liquid latex (Boils). Or put latex boils on a face mask worn during recitation of the plagues.
- Bag of kosher-for-pesach mini marshmallows (Hail).
- Pop up grasshopper and a page of locust recipes (Locusts).
- Eye mask (Darkness).
- A little coffin (Halloween party favor) with a little plastic brown baby wrapped like a mummy (Death Of First Born).



PLAGUES (LUNCH BAGS)

Hide brown paper lunch bags numbered from one to ten under each person's chair. The bags have the Hebrew names of the plagues written on each one. When the time comes for the plagues to begin, each person reaches under their chair pulling out a bag. They, in turn, open them to find funny references to the plagues: plastic sunglasses for darkness; ping pong balls for hail; bandaids and Neosporin for boils; dollar-store plastic lice, beasts, and cows, red nail polish or fake blood; and frogs, Frogs, FROGS! For the slaying of the first born, we use an empty pack of Camels cigarettes.

ON THE MAT

While most young children actually enjoy the Seder, there are some moments that may not hold their attention as long as others. Little ones will appreciate the opportunity for diversion, which you can supply thanks to homemade place mats. Use large, white poster board or construction paper to create place mats decorated with Passover games and age-appropriate questions. Some ideas:

- A maze: Children can use their fingers to trace their way from slavery to freedom.

- Make silly doodles and challenge children to find Passover designs (a piece of matzah, any of the plagues).
- Draw two Pharaohs, with about 10 slight changes from one to another. Ask children if they can find the differences between the two.
- Matzah Man, and other silly stuff: Draw a blank square and say it's a piece of matzah. See if your child can imagine ten, twenty or thirty different ideas as to what the square could become. For example, she might tell you that with just a head, arms and legs, the square would be Matzah Man. Add a roof and a window and you have a house for the matzah.
- Make a word search using Passover terms. (SedersForYou.tripod.com/#games has a plagues word search you can use.)

MATZAH FACTS

Cut up small squares and design to look like matzah pieces on one side. On the other, write interesting matzah facts you have learned by looking through the Encyclopedia Judaica, favorite books, or checking out Web sites. Did you know, for example, that there's absolutely no reason for matzah to be square? And do you know about the sports hero named Matza (Isaac Matza, of New York, was a track and field champ in the 1950s). And matzah has holes in it to prevent it from rising. They don't have to relate to matzah of course. For instance: most people think the Israelites built the pyramids, but most scholars believe this is incorrect. The best estimates for the time of enslavement is well after the Pyramid Age. Every time you eat a piece of matzah at the Seder, have your child read an amazing matzah fact.

ASK AWAY

In advance of the Seder, prepare questions your children will have fun answering. For example:

- If you were a film director and could hire any actors you wanted, who would you have star as Pharaoh? As Moses? As each of the Four Sons?
- Passover is one of the most important times to invite guests to our home. We are even commanded to open the door and ask in "all those who are hungry" to come eat. If your children could invite anyone in the world to their Seder, who would they invite and why?
- Imagine a friendly Jewish space alien landed on your doorstep just before Passover and announced that he would like to conduct your Seder this year. He tells you, "We celebrate Passover on Planet Narzon also, though we have a few different traditions." What might these be?

To involve more folks in the actual recitation of the Four Questions, ask everyone who is the youngest of their own siblings to say the Four Questions. Another variation is to have the actual youngest present start them off, and then have all the youngest in all families to join in later.

In preparation for "What is different," ask the youngest guests to point out all the ways that this night is actually different from all other nights (size of table, kinds of foods, number of guests, singing, decorations). Give points for most creative answers. [Idea from Rabbi Annie Tucker]

DECORATED GLASSES

Making their own special kiddish cups gets the kids excited about Passover before the seder, and they love showing off their work. These instructions are for a stained-glass wine cup.

Needs: Craft glue

Multicolored tissue paper, cut into small pieces

Small plastic wineglass

Paintbrush

1. Starting at the outside midsection of the glass, glue on pieces of tissue paper, working down the stem toward the bottom of the glass.

2. Completely cover the lower half of the glass with tissue paper.

Using a paintbrush, cover the entire tissue-papered area with craft glue and let it dry.



PYRAMID SCHEMES

Build a pyramid in your living room. Have your children (or if they are too small, do it yourself) build one from small boxes, blocks, bricks or any stackable items that you have. Here are Larry Gross' instructions for the elaborate pyramids shown to the right: Build a square wood base out of scrap wood (his is 40 inches wide).

Then build four equilateral triangles. Each triangle fits into one of the rectangle's sides; the triangles lean in to hold each other up.

Cut 1-inch thick styrofoam or polyfoam into 4-inch wide pieces with

lengths that fit the pyramid's bottom. (All must be trapezoids to match the frame's angle.) Each piece of poly/foam is shorter as it progresses up the side. Decorate with spray paint. If very adventurous, you can build a pyramid large enough for young children to crawl around in. This creates the scene of the Exodus story for them to play in if they get tired of



reading the Haggadah. If your children are older, you could explain to them that Israelite slaves were not responsible for the actual Egyptian Pyramids, which scholars believe were constructed by paid workers from Egypt's working classes (and, as explained above, probably were constructed long before the Israelites' enslavement).

SUPER SANDWICH

During the Seder, we read of the matzah sandwich Hillel prepared. Children will enjoy creating their own Passover sandwich using a few pictures you have drawn in advance. On any paper, sketch out pictures of about twenty items your children can imagine as food: A few brown circles, for example (these could be everything from spices to mushrooms to cookies), several long, green lines (onions? celery? lettuce?). DO NOT be specific, as the purpose is to allow your child the chance to use his or her imagination. Next, cut out each shape and place in an envelope. As you read about Hillel making his sandwich, have children open their envelopes and create their own. But in addition to making this yummy meal, they should be able to provide a reason for including each item, just as Hillel did. A child could, for example, add several pieces of sea salt to recall the parting of the Red Sea.

FOUR QUESTIONS - SEMAPHORE FLAGS, DONALD DUCK, VALLEY GIRL, ETC.

First, create flags (either Israeli flags or blue and white banners) for your kids. Then print out the Semaphore figures from our book's DVD. Have your children imagine they're on an Israeli ship on the Mediterranean Sea, and have them wave or sign the Four Questions in the actual Hebrew Semaphore used by the Israeli Navy. If you have several children, they each can alternate questions or they could do them simultaneously. It's also great fun to engage *all* of your guests; each person receives two flags and a Semaphore figure. Sitting around in a circle, the entire room signs the Four Questions in Semaphore.



Play Donald Duck reciting the Ma Nishtana. Or invite a Valley Girl to read her version. Or try to decipher the Lawyerese. Rock out with the Jamaican Reggae. Groove to the Rap version. All are in our *300 Ways* book (WhyIsThisNight.com).

ALTERNATIVES FOR THE AFIKOMEN SEARCH

For an educational Afikomen hunt, try hiding 10 cards, some in plain view, some carefully hidden. Each card lists a plague on one side, and a letter on the other. Every child finds at least one card, with older kids "letting" younger ones find easy cards (you can encourage older kids to direct the younger ones toward the obvious cards). Eventually, someone will realize the cards must be put in the order of the plagues. Once turned over, the letters spell out where the Afikomen is hidden (eg, "the freezer"). All retrieve the Afikomen together, thus avoiding a "winner" and many upset "losers." You can follow this gimmick with the parts of the seder (Kadesh, Urchatz, Karpas ...), the items in "Who Knows One," the animals listed in Chad Gadya, or anything listed sequentially in the Haggadah.

ACTIVITY CARDS

Distribute cards in envelopes to all the kids, and periodically call on each one (or when they start getting bored) to open their envelope and follow the card's activity.

Cards for 4-8 year-olds: Pick someone to sing Ma Nishtana with their mouth closed. Ask someone to be Mrs Pharaoh trying to convince her husband to *Let the Jews Go*. Ask someone to be a frog from the plagues. 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? What plague would you least like to experience? Act it out ... Lots of Jews were scared to leave Egypt with Moses. Pick 2 people at the table and have one convince the other to leave. Ask everyone at the table to make sounds like the Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea. All together! There was a lot of crazy weather during the plagues. Ask someone to give a weather report for Egypt during that time.

Cards for 8-12 year-olds: Pick 2 of the 7 dwarfs (Doc, Bashful, Grumpy, Sneezy, Dopey, Sleepy, and Happy) and imagine what questions they would ask at a Seder. Create an advertising slogan to get people to move to Egypt during the plagues. 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. Ask some people at the table what is their favorite Seder memory. Why do they like that moment? 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. 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 someone to be a CNN reporter covering the Exodus live from Egypt as it is happening. What do you like most about the Seder? You answer and choose one more person to also answer. [From Ayeka.org.il]

THE AMAZING RACE (MIMIC OF TV SHOW)

Each part of the seder (Kadesh, Urchatz, ...) is a pit stop. At each location, there is route info (readings, questions, directions) to get us there. Lots of opportunities for making the learning more fun.

DAYENU MADNESS

After each verse of Dayenu, the leader announces how the chorus is to be sung. Some examples:

- Only women
- Shouting
- Whispering
- While leaning to the right

Another variation: Each line sung to a different melody:

- Happy Birthday
- Frosty the snowman
- You are my sunshine
- On top of spaghetti

Great method for both: Draw suggestion slips out of a hat – participants and leaders don't know what's coming next!



DRAW YOUR OWN 4 SONS

Another idea is to have each child draw a representation of the 4 sons. Making a visual representation of Wicked, Wise, Simple, and Too Young to Ask gives them a more direct involvement than just reading from the Haggadah. Have each child show the drawing during the seder, or posterize them (a ledger sheet, 11x17, is about a buck). Attach a bed sheet to a wall, then hang pictures with safety or straight pins on the sheet.

IMAGES OF FREEDOM

Ask everyone to bring a visual representation of freedom. This can be as global as a photo of Nelson Mandela, or as personal as your car keys or a take-out menu. It will be a great ice-breaker; you'll find people share wonderful images.

PLAGUES PUZZLES

On our [seder site](#), there are several puzzles you can print out that will challenge your guests to associate pictures with each of the plagues. (Answers are provided.) You can use the easy ones first, and the harder ones later as your participants get more experienced, year by year. It's fun to form teams (by family, friends, age groups) that compete.

TAKE OFF DURING L'SHANA HABA'AH

We created paper airplanes, with the El Al logo, complete with teaming Israelites and a Charlton Heston 'Moses'. Distribute them and launch during *L'Shana Haba'a* for a hilarious end of the seder. (Also on our seder site.)



CHAD GADYA

Scholar Noam Zion recommends starting the entire seder by singing *Chad Gadya*. Everyone participates, it's fun, and it sets the right mood for the whole seder. Several families mentioned their own fathers once decided to do the ending songs first, since folks often leave before the end. There are several fun ways of doing the song: have people volunteer for, or assign various sound effects at the appropriate time: ox ("moo"); water ("whoosh"); fire ("ouch"), stick ("whack"), little dog ("ruff ruff"), little cat ("meow"), little goat ("ma ma"), my Abba bought ("thanks Dad"). Reena Seltzer's family passes out masks for each character as well making the sound of each character.

HALLEL with TAMBOURINES and INSTRUMENTS

Several people have suggested to us buying some inexpensive tambourines, and hand-painting them to be used during the Hallel part of the seder. (Designs shown here: Next Year in Jerusalem, Crossing the Red Sea, and Halleluya – are Reena Seltzer's.) Sing Debbie Friedman's lively *Miriam's Song*: *And the women dancing with their timbrels/ Followed Miriam as she sang her song ... Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long*. Distribute lots of noise makers – bells, triangles, maracas – for a joyous celebration.



Skits

Both skits are on our site. Fred Kaimann wrote a great skit depicting the "real" story of how the 10 plagues were selected.

C.E.O. Angel: (*businesslike*) I'd like to thank everyone for coming to this emergency meeting of the Plague Selection Committee. Moses needs plagues to reestablish credibility. The floor is open for your ideas.

C.O.O. Angel: Bad hair days.

Senior Angel: How about sock-eating dryers? That way all of Egypt would wear only mismatched socks.

Managing Angel: Hiccups. We shall irk them with hiccups ...

Jon Greene wrote a funny send-up of Abbot and Costello's *Who's on First*:

Abbott: You know, at our seder last night we had a great time with the four children. We gave them all names.

Costello: You gave the children names? That sounds like fun. Tell me.

Abbott: Well let's see, we have Who's the wise child, What's the wicked child, and I Don't Know is the simple child.

Costello: That's what I want to find out.

Abbott: I say, Who's the wise, What's the wicked, and I Don't Know's the simple.

Costello: You don't know the children's names? **Abbott:** Well I should.

Costello: Well then who is wise? **Abbott:** Yes.

Costello: I mean the child's name. **Abbott:** Who. **Costello:** The wise child. **Abbott:** Who. (And on it goes ...)

Karen Kravitz suggests an educational skit, *Moses Lost in Time*. Moses is lost in present-day time. He sees a therapist, who hypnotizes him back to different time periods to talk about freedom: Freedom in the time of Lincoln (the Emancipation Proclamation) & Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King & the Freedom Riders (Civil Rights Movement), Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela (Fight against Apartheid), even modern leaders like Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar/Burma). Supplement with various famous speeches about freedom.

Knowledge Games

FAMILY FEUD

Trivia about Passover story or seder. Halves of table or different families compete.

GRAB BAG

Kids choose interesting items (about 10) related to Passover. Older kids like the creativity of choosing unique items. These are put in a bag. Every so often during Maggid, bag passed around and someone pulls out an item and says how it's connected to Pesach. Person who chose item then explains the connection – often they won't be the same! Can ask other people also. Generates good conversation.

Examples:

- A sneaker (leaving Egypt in the middle of the night)
- Stuffed dog (the dogs didn't bark)
- Teddy bear (plague of wild animals)
- Toy sheep
- Gold/silver/jewelry

WHAT DOESN'T BELONG? (PUZZLE CARDS)

Hand out cards with puzzles about the Seder. For older children, various styles of questions are important, such as "What doesn't belong?", "What is the common theme?", multiple choice, Jeopardy, etc. The real inspiration here is once the kids get the hang of it, have each child develop 2 questions for their classmates or siblings.

- What doesn't belong?
Maror, Matza, Birkat Hamazon, Afikomen
Israel, Midyan, Egypt, Pharoahs' House
Moses, Burning Bush, Red Sea, Manna
- What's the common theme?
Water, weather, animals, death
Wandering, spy report, Moses' death
Purim, Chupah, Havdalah, Seder
Had He not split the sea, If He had done nothing against the Egyptians, Even no Mt. Sinai
- These are clues to what?
Bitter, tasty, green
Thin, holey, shapeless, no time
- How many times is Eliyahu Hanavi mentioned in the Haggaddah and where?
Once, in Birkat Hamazon.
- How many questions should children ask at the Seder?
As many as possible.

20 QUESTIONS / WHAT AM I?

Scarf around forehead holds paper listing a Passover-related item. Each person determines item by asking yes/no questions. Everyone answers. Often some say yes and others say no; other times, the answer isn't a simple yes or no – lots of fun. Game isn't just for children – fun when adults have to guess as well! Typically start with *Is it a person?*, ... *place?*, ... *thing?* Works very well; great for all ages. Some examples:

- Crossing the Red Sea
- Chad Gadya
- Pharaoh
- Pesach
- Moses
- Pharaoh's Daughter
- Chametz
- Rabbi Eliezer
- Frogs
- Burning Bush
- Afikomen
- Haggadah



NUMBER TRIVIA

Kids come up with trivia associated with each number.

- 2 = Matzah pieces after Yachatz; we dip twice tonight
- 3 = Forefathers; # Matzahs; Rabbi Gamliel's acronym
- 4 = Cups of wine; sons; questions
- 5 = Rabbis at Bnai Brak
- 10 = Plagues; characters in Chad Gadya
- 12 = Must finish Afikomen before 12:00; time of Angel of Death
- 13 = Items in "Who knows one?"
- 200 = Plagues according to Rabbi Eliezer

MEMORY GAMES

Have kids memorize the plagues – both forwards and backwards. Give prizes or points for those who get the whole list or for those who do it the fastest. Instead of using the plagues, use the steps of the seder. This will teach children patience, recognizing that there's more to the seder after the Afikomen.

THE (SLAVE) APPRENTICE

Team building exercises: Ala Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*, have groups perform various tasks, such as:

- Build a pyramid using only matzah, charoses and almond butter.
- Make a basket to hold the baby Moses (from the same materials).
- Memorize the plagues in reverse order (in unison).

Decorations & Discussion Topics / Enriching the Story

Many families stage a backdrop for the seder. Some ideas are to decorate the walls with scenes from ancient Egypt; build a table- or room-sized pyramid; draw pictures of camels (or have camel cut-outs) ... let your imagination run! Put plastic frogs on the table, on the glasses, in the chandelier! Funny poster ads for embalming companies and pyramid rentals can be downloaded from SedersForYou.com.



Placecards can be decorated thematically: the name along with a drawing of a frog, or wine cup; a ticket for a flight on Air Canaan; wine corks tied with matzah ribbon; individual bud vases; or names in hieroglyphics (the Penn Museum has an online translator). (Ideas due to Reena Seltzer.)

For a seder that provides more involvement for adults, give assignments to your participants so they can lead discussions on various topics. Suggestions - some are for a single person, some for the entire group:

- Wine is a symbol of joy. Ask everyone to share what they are most joyful about. "My cup of joy is for ..."
- Ask each person to mention a current-day plague.
- Does it really matter what kind of bone you roast?
- Does a Lazy-Boy at the seder table count as reclining?

Ask questions during the seder that will encourage folks to tell their own stories. When talking about Moses being a stranger in a strange land, ask if anyone has a story of a special kindness shown them by strangers. After explaining the tradition of dressing up as Elijah (or simply opening the door for Eliyahu), ask if anyone had any interesting experiences with opening the door. Did a grandpa try to make the wine glass shake or make the wine level go down?

Tell the story – what's most meaningful about the story and lessons for your family, your community, for the world? Ask yourself how you'd answer those questions. Or ask your guests to do so.

Here's a haunting illustration of the plagues' destruction. Ask your guests to tell you how many older and younger siblings they have, and to send you their picture – let on no more than you're planning something about genealogy. When your guests enter, they see their own pictures mounted on sticks along the tables. Many of the pictures are crossed out with a big X. (For an illustration, see [this PBS segment](#).) Came time for the plagues, reveal the crossed-out pictures are the first-born in your own community. It will be an experience none will ever forget – it brings home how much devastation was caused by that disaster.

Make It Real, Make It Personal, Make It Fun

Our best advice, especially for seders with children, is to make it real, personal and fun.

A few suggestions to make it Real:

- Tell your participants they will be leaving for another country in one week. What two or three things would they pack that are most important to them? (Spend a few minutes discussing these.)
- Create personalized passports, stamped with appropriate locales.
- Think of 3 things to bring to a desert island that will insure your grandchildren will remain Jewish.

To make it Personal:

- Relate family stories of life in (say) Eastern Europe for your ancestors. (Or use your imagination.)
- Relate what seders were like for you sitting at your own Grandparents table.

And make it Fun:

- For your children, it will deepens their love for the holiday, by creating special, cherished memories. They will look forward to the holiday and create a life-long love derived from pride that their family's seder is special. (Ideas due to Noam Zion and Ayelet Cohen)

Is 'Starving at the Seder' one of the Ten Plagues? Is 'When Do We Eat' the Fifth Question?

Traditional seders went on forever, and participants only had parsley to dine on while the Haggadah was read.

This was never the intention of the Haggadah-constructors of old, and should not be the tradition that we give to our children.

- Once the blessing for Karpas is made – nearly immediately after the first cup's kiddush – then any sort of vegetable, greens, crudités available for your guests. Encourage them to snack often and they will enjoy the seder more. You can even use bananas (Rabbi Teitz and Rav Elozor Preil maintain the blessing can be *ha'adama* as bananas don't grow on a true tree).
- Set expectations: At the start, tell guests you've planned a seder where the time before dinner will be (say) 75 minutes. Keep an eye on your watch – if you're running behind, drop some planned discussions/activities so you'll finish within in promised time. When participants have no idea how long it will go on, they'll look at their watch every ten minutes, get antsy and annoying! Instead, set proper expectations and they'll willingly participate, knowing deliverance (eg, food) is on the way!

Games

HOCUS-POCUS / HIGGLY-PIGGLY

Disgusting river [vile Nile]

Good grape drink [fine wine]

Amphibian sandals [frog clogs]

ADD PERSONALIZED DAYENUS

If there had been only Bach, Dayenu! For chocolate butter-cream frosting, Dayenu!

That the Red Sox won the World Series once in my lifetime, Dayenu!

For my granddaughter, Lisa, Dayenu! If we had only gone to one seder, Dayenu!

PASSOVER BINGO

Make 5x5 cards using Hagaddah words. Each kid gets 25 marshmallows or chocolate chips (or a healthier alternative, carrots). Whenever they see/hear a word, they cover it with a marshmallow or a candy. At Bingo, they get to eat the candy/marshmallows. All 25, gets a prize. Great idea: have your older siblings make up bingo cards for younger kids.

(For pre-schoolers, use pictures of important words in the Maggid: Frogs, Egypt, Desert, Wine Cup, Shankbone, Matzah.)
For non-DIY families, try Dena Ackerman's 30 different colorful cards: [download from here](#).

TOM SWIFTIES [FOR OLDER KIDS, especially if they love puns]

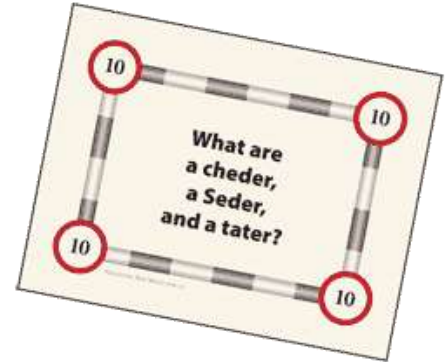
"Send that lowly Hebrew slave down to the dungeon!" said Pharaoh condescendingly.

"No arguments. On Passover you eat only matzah," said God flatly.

"I didn't do anything!" Adam lied fruitlessly. (Eg: no apple! :)

THE JEOPARDY GAME

Here's a "seder-participant-created" Jeopardy game. Your guests come with some made-up examples of Question-Answer pairs. Your invitation contains some examples to spur their creativity, such as: Official dance of Passover [Q: What is The Macaroonia? or What is The Matzarena?] or The Seder [Q: What's the Matzah meal?].



We can point to you to a beautifully done and more faithful representation of the actual Jeopardy TV show: Joe Gelles designed a Jeopardy game board, taking ideas from Caren Shiloh, of Shaker Heights, OH. It's the real deal, with categories ("By the Numbers", "Jew Speak", "When do we Eat" and "Rim Shots"), point keeping, and easy-to-hard questions. This will really liven up your seder while waiting for the soup to get served. Download from [SederFun.com/images/S-J_small Q&A.pdf](#). These are free, but if you use and like the game, Caren requests a small donation to: Beth El-The Heights Synagogue, 3246 Desota Ave, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118.

MAD LIBS, etc

Remember Mad Libs? It was a fun interactive parlor game from the last century.

The Story of _____ (Religious holiday). About _____ (number) years ago, the Jewish people, called Hebrews, lived in the land of _____ (place). At first everything was fine and the Hebrews could _____ (list of fun activities). And on it goes. You go through the story, randomly asking for answers to fill in the underlined segments. Then, you read the whole thing back with the answers your group provided - it's a blast. Download one version or make up your own. Even more puzzles and games are available from [SedersForYou.tripod.com/#games](#)

THE MATCH GAME / MATCH THE STARS

Every adult is the star, children are contestants. Host reads question, stars write answers on index card and hide it. Contestant writes down their answers, which are then revealed. Stars reveal their answers. Contestant gets one point for each star they match. When done, contestant with most points wins.

- 1) The Kosher Cook is putting on a TV show, it's called the Monday Night _____ ball.
- 2) At Levi's seder, the Matzo Ball soup has so much hair in it, before Levi serves it, he has to _____ it.
- 3) Reuben the Rabbi is so dumb, he tells his congregants Moses parted the Red Sea with his _____.

IMAGINIFF / IMAGINE IF

Each person gets 6 voting cards (numbered 1-6) to vote for answers to questions. Questions read aloud, everyone places a voting card face down. Most popular answers get 2 points (tie: 1 point). Play for self or in teams.

Imagine If Pharaoh was an animal,
which would he be?

- 1 Giraffe
- 2 Elephant
- 3 Lion
- 4 Monkey
- 5 Swan
- 6 Eagle

Imagine If the Rasha (Evil Son) were a weapon:
which would he be?

- 1 Scissors
- 2 Magic
- 3 Gun
- 4 Bow & Arrow
- 5 Knife
- 6 Pitchfork

At end of each round, explain your reasoning to generate great discussions.

CHARADES / TABLEAU

Kids prepare mini-pantomime before Pesach; adults guess the scene. Keeps them busy for hours before Pesach. Kids & adults can play a speeded Charades version. Scene difficulty matched to each age level.

Easy examples:

Darkness; blood; lice; starving; searching for Chametz; singing at the Red Sea; opening the Door for Elijah

Medium examples:

Leaving Egypt; Chametz; receiving the Torah; Eliyahu Hanavi; seder plate; snakes; splitting the Red Sea

Hard examples:

Making Matzah in 18 minutes; magicians; locusts; slavery; 40 years; Moses' staff, Chad Gadya; midnight; manna

LET 'ER RIP/LETTER RIP

Divide class or table into 2 groups, who answer alternately. Sample questions:

- Chametz items beginning with the letter "d" or "s"
- Words connected to freedom with the letter "l" or "b" in them
- Food associated with Pesach beginning with "f" or "m"
- Words associated with Pesach beginning with "Mem" or "m"
(Examples of *mem* answers: Ma Nishtana, Maggid, Manna, Maror, Moshiach, Mashkof, Matbilim, Matzah, Mayim, Melech (salt), Memuna, Mesubim, Mezuzah, Mi Yodeah, Midbar, Midyan, Mikdash, Miriam, Mitah (death), Mitzrayim, Mitzvah, Moses, Motzei.

Songs

Each year, many folks have their in-boxes filled with song parodies. Some are less widely known. The first song recites the plagues using melodies familiar to small kids:

Start with the tune of Michael Row The Boat Ashore:

Pharaoh set my people free, Moses pleaded. (2x)

Moses turned the Nile to blood, Pharaoh fretted. (2x)

Continue, to the tune of Three Blind Mice:

One thousand frogs, one thousand frogs, See how they hop, see how they hop.

They all died after the Pharaoh lied, Then came the lice and the insects that fled.

Give us our freedom the Hebrews cried. The plagues go on. The plagues go on.

Many cows died, many cows died ...

Back to the tune of Michael Row The Boat Ashore:

Let the first born son be slain, God commanded. (2x)

Now the Hebrews were set free, Hallelujah! (2x)

A quick Passover Round sung to *Frere Jacques*:

Roasted shank bone (2x) Hard-Boiled Egg (2x) Karpas and Charoseth (2x) Bitter Herbs (2x)



The third song (mostly for adults) composed by a dear friend to the tune of *West Side Story's "America"*:

Freed us from slavery, Dayenu!

Slaughtered their progeny, Dayenu!

Split open wide the sea, Dayenu!

Drowned all our enemies, Dayenu!

How many favors has God wrought?

All of our battles that He fought?

So much thanksgiving that we owe

God rules on High and down below ...

Ten Little Egyptians (tune of "5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed")

Ten little Egyptians playing in the mud

All of a sudden, the water turned to BLOOD

Moses said to Pharaoh, let my people go

Or more plagues will come of this I know.

Nine little Egyptians chopping up some logs

When out of nowhere they were surrounded by FROGS

Pharaoh said to Moses, I will not set you free

No matter what your G-d does to me ...

If I Only Had Some Chrain (to the tune of "If I Only Had A Brain")

We are sitting at the seder,
More food is coming later,
But now I am in pain.
It would help my digestion,
I could get through all four questions
If I only had some chrain.

The hosts would speed it up if they knew,
We'd get through the Dayenu
And not do each refrain ...

Tune of Dayenu

Had he saved us, saved us, saved us,
Saved us from the mean Egyptians
And not given them conniptions, Dayenu
Had he given those Egyptians
Unforgettable conniptions
Without smashing all their idols, Dayenu
Had he smashed up all their idols --
Pulverized those gal- and guy-dolls
Without killing all their first-born, Dayenu ...

The Seder Rap (Put on sunglasses and turn cap around :)

Gonna tell you all a story, 'bout the Jews in Egypt, They had a good thing goin', there was no complaint.
But then there came this Pharaoh, who was mean and nasty, He worked them night and day, from the heat they did faint.

They pleaded unto God, "Save us all, your children", And God looked down to them, he was quite distressed.
So God appeared to Moses through a bush on fire, He said "Go back to Egypt, go clear up this mess."

Chorus: Tell the story, find the matzah, drink the cups of wine.
It's all in celebration, so let's sing and dine ...

The Plagues - The Musical!

BLOOD: "Old Man River"
Ol' Nile River, that Ol' Nile River,
To blood it's turnin', It keeps on churnin'
It keeps on spewin', It just keeps flowin' a-long.

FROGS: "Jeremiah was a Bull Frog"
Jeremiah was a bull frog, had a lot of friends you know
He called every one, said, "Let's go have some fun
We'll crawl right out of the Nile, and Egypt we'll defile.

LICE: "To Life!"
The Lice, The Lice, I gottem
I gottem, I gottem, the Lice
Pharaoh, O, Pharaoh, O, please give in

We want to save our skin
Lice - I gottem, the Lice.

BOILS: "Go Away Little Girl"
Go away little boils, Go away little boils,
It's hurting me more each minute that you delay.
When you are on me like this,
You're much too hard to resist ...

HAIL: "Hello, Dolly"
Hailstones Dolly, well, Hailstones Dolly,
They are falling fast and hard upon your head.
You don't look well, Dolly, I can tell, Dolly
Your face has several bruises, you should be in bed.

Complete lyrics for all these songs is on SedersForYou.tripod.com/#songs

Customs

It's fun to shake things up and highlight customs from other communities.

There is a widespread custom among Sephardic Jews, where members of the family dress up as if they had just left Egypt. Others ask questions and the wandering Jew explains that he has left Egypt and is on his way to Jerusalem. Here are some more:

- One person takes a matzah and ties it in a scarf on his shoulder and walks around the house. The others ask him: "Why are you doing this?" He replies "Thus did our ancestors when they left Egypt in haste." (Or make up your own answer.)

- A custom that began in 14th C Spain, recites the "In haste we left Egypt" passage three times, and then the leader walks around the table three times tapping the seder plate on each person's head, each time tapping harder. Children can jump up to hit the seder plate with their heads.
- In a German custom from the 1600s, when the door is opened during "Pour out your wrath," someone in costume enters the room, as if he is Elijah announcing the coming of the Messiah. One of the children could be the surprise Elijah.
- In an even earlier (1200s) custom from the Jews in Allemande (Germany), after eating Karpas, everyone left the table with matzot covered in cloth, placed it upon their shoulders and walked to all the corners of the house. They returned to their places for the rest of the seder.
- During Dayenu, enact the custom of the Persian / Iranian Jews: They hold bunches of either celery or scallions in their hands and lightly beat each other on the back and shoulders to symbolize the sting of the taskmaster's whip.
- A variation has participants take turns being an Egyptian taskmaster, lightly beating another person with the celery or scallions. As one person is done, they pass the vegetables to the next person at the table, and so on until everyone has their turn. While this is happening, all wish everyone "*Sentak-khadhra*" (a blessing for a green, fruitful year) or "*Sant-il-khadra*" (a year of good fortune).

Dealing with Recalcitrant Family

The key to successful seders is preparation. Think about what you want to discuss, plan what you can skip if adults or kids get antsy, have some fun activities in your back pocket to enlist the help of some humor. But even with planning, what can you do if adults say "I really will not tolerate another endless and boring seder"? The best idea I've heard is to agree on a duration – 45 mins / 1 hour – and tell them wherever we are at that time, we'll simply stop reading and begin the meal. Another idea is to serve the first few courses of dinner while the seder proceeds: at karpas, serve the egg; during the 4 sons have soup, and so on.

What's everyone's expectation when sitting in the dining room? We're going to eat. When your family isn't served, you'll be pummeled with a bunch of "Get this over with." Get away from the dining room. Hold the first portion of the seder somewhere else: the family room, a bedroom, outside if you can. A few snack tables can hold the symbolic/ritual items. Changing the locale creates a dramatic change in mood: people relax, which will give you latitude to explore a few topics in depth.

A final idea is to involve them: passive sitting makes everything seem longer. Give out assignments, a role to play, something to lead. One leader said they assign every section of the seder to their participants. Be responsible for leading – research it, bring something interesting – everyone participates, and she only has to coordinate the result. Another told us he parcels out the story with the following assignment: working as teams, you have 15 minutes to come up with a play, a song, a skit to convey that section. Everyone does their thing, in the proper story order, and they never refer to a Haggadah!

Recipes

CHOCOLATE MACAROONS

"These are amazing. You'll never eat them from the can again!" They have a thin outer crust and a chewy inside.

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces semisweet chocolate
- 4 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 4 large egg whites
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 cups shredded coconut

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375°. Line 2 cookie sheets with parchment paper, or grease them lightly with butter or vegetable oil. Melt both chocolates in the top of a double boiler placed over simmering water, then cool the chocolate to tepid. Beat the egg whites in a medium-size mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until frothy, about 30 seconds. Gradually add the sugar and continue beating until the mixture is the consistency of marshmallow fluff, about 30 seconds more. Blend in the vanilla, then fold in the melted chocolate, then the coconut.

Drop rounded tablespoonfuls of the dough about 1 inches apart onto the prepared cookie sheet. Bake the macaroons until a light crust forms on the outside, about 13 minutes. (Be careful not to overcook them!) Cool on the cookie sheet or remove the macaroons to a cooling rack.

Yield ~24 macaroons. This recipe is from *Rosie's Bakery All-Butter, Fresh Cream, Sugar-Packed, No-Holds-Barred Baking Book* by Judy Rosenberg, printed in 1991 by Workman Publishing. Recipe recommended by Leah Winograd, caterer/baker extraordinaire.

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Ingredients:

9-10 oz. semi or bittersweet chocolate
1½ c. sugar
2 sticks margarine
9 eggs, separated

Directions:

Melt chocolate, margarine, and half of the sugar. Whip egg whites till soft peaks, continue beating adding the rest of the sugar. Beat until very stiff. Add 5 egg yolks and mix well. Fold in chocolate mixture and pour into containers. Chill for at least 3 hours.

OVERNIGHT MATZAH "FRENCH TOAST"

Ingredients:

¼ cup (4 Tbsp.) butter, melted
¾ cup packed light brown sugar
10 sheets of matzah
8 eggs, slightly beaten
1 cup whole milk
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. ground ginger
⅛ tsp. salt
maple syrup and powdered sugar for topping (optional)

Directions:

In a small bowl combine brown sugar and melted butter and pour on the bottom of a 9x13" baking dish. Wet matzah and then hold it up to get out most of the dripping water. Arrange matzah in baking dish overlapping if necessary. Combine milk, eggs, vanilla, salt, cinnamon, and ginger in a bowl and pour evenly over matzah. When all is moist, push down matzah to fill pan. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and place in refrigerator for 4-12 hours or overnight.

In the morning, take pan out of fridge for at least 10 minutes while oven is preheating to 350 degrees. Bake for 30-35 minutes. If top starts browning or drying too quickly place a foil loosely over the top of casserole for the last 10 minutes or so. (You want it to cook long enough to make sure the bottom part is cooked but not dried out.) Remove pan from oven and let it cool slightly before serving. Serve with a dusting of powdered sugar and a drizzle of maple syrup or jam (any berry jam works well). To make it parve/lactose-free, substitute parve margarine for the butter and almond milk for the milk. Serves ~10.

PASSOVER CHOCOLATE SPONGE CAKE

When preparing the almonds, a hand grinder is preferable to a food processor or blender because electric machines bring out the oil in nuts. If a blender or food processor is used, grate only ½ cup at a time. Do not pack down when measuring.

Ingredients:

6 oz. semisweet chocolate
7/8 cup white sugar
10 eggs, separated
2 cups ground almonds

Directions:

Melt chocolate in top of double boiler; set aside. Beat egg yolks until thick and lemon colored. Gradually beat in sugar. Blend in chocolate and almonds. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold whites into chocolate batter. Spoon batter into an ungreased 10 inch bundt pan. Bake at 350° for 1 hour, or until cake springs back when lightly touched. Remove from oven, invert pan, and cool about 40 minutes before removing from pan. Makes 1 10-inch bundt cake (12 servings).

PASSOVER COCONUT PYRAMIDS

Makes 45. Unsweetened coconut is available in health-food stores.

Ingredients:

1¾ cups sugar
2 Tbsp. unsalted margarine, melted
5¼ cups unsweetened shredded coconut
1 tsp. pure almond extract
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
7 large egg whites
4 ounces semisweet chocolate
1 pinch of salt
½ tsp. pure vegetable shortening



Directions:

Heat oven to 350°. Line a baking sheet with parchment. In a large bowl, using your hands, mix together sugar, coconut, egg whites, and salt. Add margarine and extracts, and combine well. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Moisten palms of hands with cold water. Roll 1 Tbsp. of the coconut mixture in palms, squeezing tightly together 2 or 3 times to form a compact ball. Place ball on a clean surface, and using a spatula, flatten one side at a time to form a pyramid shape. Place pyramids on the prepared baking sheet about 1 inch apart, and bake until edges are golden brown, about 15 minutes. Leave on baking sheet on a wire rack to cool completely.

Place chocolate and shortening in a small heat-proof bowl, and set over a pan of simmering water; stir occasionally until melted. Dip top half inch of each pyramid in the melted chocolate. Set each dipped macaroon on cooled baking sheet to allow chocolate to harden. (Recipe sent to me by several people; also shown on Martha Stewart's site.)

CHOCOLATE CHIP MERINGUE COOKIES

Ingredients:

3 egg whites
¾ cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
6 oz. mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Beat egg whites until peaks form. Add sugar into the egg whites 1 tsp at a time. Gently stir in vanilla. Beat until the egg whites are stiff and shiny. Fold in chocolate chips and nuts. Drop by tablespoonful onto greased aluminum foil. Put into oven on middle shelf and turn oven off. Leave overnight in oven. If you have an oven with a pilot light, turn oven off but watch cookies and leave in for about 20 minutes or until done. Makes about 28 fair-sized cookies. If you want more, drop by teaspoonful but be sure to leave room for them to spread. Due to Jean Fluger.

VEGETARIAN CHOPPED LIVER

By Trish MacDonald's Aunt Rina. It tastes exactly like the recipe with meat. Easy to make, and freezes well.

Ingredients:

5 large onions
4 eggs
1 ¼ cup walnuts
1 sheet of onion matzah
½ can (15 ½ oz) drained green peas (hard to believe, just follow)
1 ½ tbsp olive oil

Directions:

Hard-boil the eggs (ahead of time and refrigerate, if you want). Cut the onions into small pieces that can be broken up in a large pan. Add the oil, cover pan and slowly caramelize the onions over a low heat until medium-to-dark brown.

Put onions, eggs, peas, walnuts, matzah (broken into 5 or 6 pieces) into (Cuisinart) food processor. Pulse, don't pureé, until you get the texture of chopped liver. Salt and pepper to taste.

It is most important that onions are caramelized to a medium to dark brown for recipe to taste exactly like chopped liver. (The other half of the can of peas may be frozen with its juice for next time you make the recipe - Trish says you'll like this enough that you'll be making it frequently.)

VEGETARIAN SYMBOLS

To carry the vegetarian sensibility to the seder plate, you don't have to use a lamb shank. Even in Biblical times, a beet was sometimes used to represent the Paschal sacrifice. Both would have been able to mark the door frame so the Angel of Death would pass over. Rabbi Huna is quoted as saying in the Talmud "Even beets and rice can be used for the 2 cooked foods on the seder plate." (Ref: Pesachim1 14b)

HUEVOS HAMINADOS ("Brown eggs" in Ladino)

Traditional Sephardic custom

Eggs are placed in onion skins and then gently simmered overnight either in the oven or on top of the stove at a low temperature. Either tea leaves or spent coffee grinds are added to the roasting materials for added flavor. *Huevos Haminados* cradled in onion skins tastes somewhat like hard-boiled eggs. However, the simmering for a long period of time gives them a softer and tender texture without being rubbery, as well as a rich, oniony fragrance.

Ingredients:

- 4-5 packed cups of onion skins (rinse if dirty)
- 12 large eggs (in shell – make sure shells have no cracks)
- 2 tbsp coffee grounds (optional)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp vinegar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/3 tsp black pepper

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 200 degrees F. Arrange half the onion skins on the bottom of a large ovenproof pot or casserole. Put the eggs on top. If the eggs are tightly packed, or if you must place the eggs in two layers, use additional onion skins to cradle them. Add the coffee grounds, oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Cover with the remaining onion skins. Pour in 2 or more quarts of cold water to cover the eggs. Cover pot and bake in the oven for at least 8 hours or overnight.

A Few Recommended Haggadahs - Personal Favorites after Leading more than 40 Years of Seders

- "A Different Night" Haggadah; Noam Zion, and the newer "A Night to Remember" (HaggadahsRUs.com or any Jewish bookstore). Many novel ideas for taking the seder in unusual directions. ISBN:0966474007
- "The Family Guide to Spiritual Celebration: The Passover Seder" Ron Wolfson. Includes interviews with people who've done clever seder activities. ISBN:1580231748
- "Uncle Eli's Special-For-Kids Most Fun Ever Under-The-Table Passover Haggadah" Eliezer Segal. Dr Seuss-style fun poetry for the entire seder. ISBN:1886411263
- "All My Bones Shall Speak" Haggadah; Dr Barry Ivker. Privately published. Barry and Fran Ivker; 2559 Foothills Dr. Birmingham, AL 35226. Order: drfbi@netzero.com. Excellent, knowledgeable and interesting commentary filled with Barry's amazing artwork that was featured in the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Web Resources

- Seders For You SedersForYou.tripod.com
Themed seders, original songs and parodies, puzzles and games
Easiest to find by using Google "Seders for you"

Download handout with all these suggestions – Handout of "Seder Suggestions" under Other Useful Resources

- Simchat Yechiel SimchatYechiel.org/english/pesach.html
Lots of great ready-to-use ideas (Miriam & Ephrayim Naiman, in Ramat Beit Shemesh)

- Seder Fun SederFun.com
Several nice games and ideas (Joe Gelles)

- Why Is This Night / 300 Ways to Ask The Four Questions WhysThisNight.com
Every imaginable version of the Four Questions, from the Egyptian language at the Exodus, Jewish languages around the world, to fun parodies: Valley Girl, Shakespearean, Pig Latin, Reggae, Hebrew Semaphore, Klingon ... Get signed copies!

Under Customs tab, our site lists over 3 dozen seder traditions and customs from around the world

- Sign up for Passover Alerts: 3 issues emailed to your Inbox. Contains creative suggestions, practical ideas and recipes contributed by our readers. Sign up via either website below.