

## SEDER Activities 2014

### 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 to 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.
- 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 aloud. 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-aneccote. 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

**Ma Nishtana assignments.** Under each chair or preassigned places the seder leader places an envelop 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 Years 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.

**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

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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 maftaiach – ptach lanu bli maftiach. Ptach lanu kol hadelatot, shvor meialeiniu 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).

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*).

### **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 lose 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 percentage to be donated to Tzedakah with matching funds from adults.

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

### **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 Sudan and what could have not been 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 terribly.

**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)

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 horseradishes. 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 in 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?

### **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 a version 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.

### **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?

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

- 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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- There are a number of dramatic sections in the Passover story that lend themselves to pantomime. A few samples can be found below. Feel free to add your own ideas to this list as well. The more creative and engaging our seders are the more impact we can have.
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- Ask a group of participants to plan and then act out the following:
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- *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?*
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- *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?
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- *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?
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- *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?
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- 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 (Marcelle Zion)**

**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 urchatz) 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 an 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 you 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.

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

**Make El Al paper airplanes**

**Password or Pantomimes** with Pesach phrases.