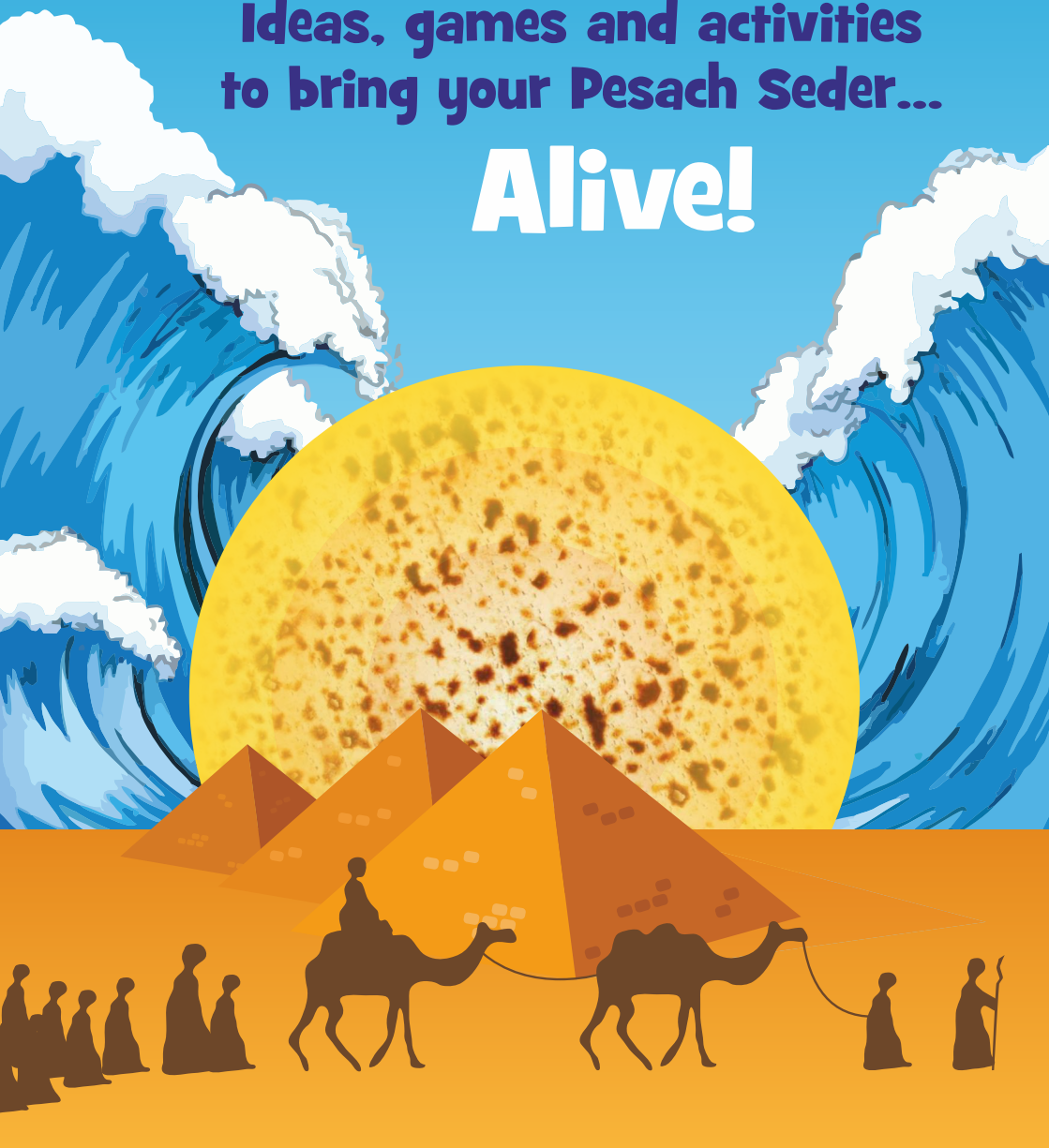
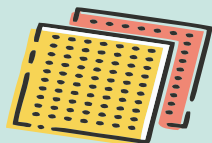


The Seder Night Companion

Ideas, games and activities
to bring your Pesach Seder...

Alive!





Throughout the year, the evening of the Seder stands unique within the Jewish year...

We want the Pesach story to come alive for us and for our family.

The goal of this short booklet is to offer you some practical ideas to help you do just this – bring the story alive, but importantly, to enhance the Seder and not to replace it.

Every family has their own customs and ways of running their Seder and these should be clung onto. These ideas are here to help you supplement your Seder and to help engage all those around the table.

Feel free to take the ideas and customise them to suit you and your family needs.

Wishing you a very happy Pesach and a meaningful and enjoyable Seder.

The Seed Team

Seed



Contents

Setting the Scene

Seder night is a highlight of the Jewish calendar for parents and children alike. It is the night that revolves around children, and parents are reminded of the importance of their role as educators. (Thankfully the Haggadah gives us lots of tools and tips!)

Rabbi Sacks zt"l explains that on the eve of the original Pesach, at the very moment when a new chapter in the life of the Jewish people began, we found out what it means to be a Jew: "About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators."

Being a Jew means being both a student and an educator, and Seder night is our opportunity to focus on both these roles.



PART 2

The Seder - understanding the steps

Ha Lachma Anya – this is the bread of affliction

It is a mitzvah to tell the story of the Exodus on Seder night. We call this mitzvah *maggid*, and it is the key to Seder night. This is why the Haggadah begins with *Ha Lachma Anya*, which is an invitation to others to join our Seder and tell the story with us. This paragraph is written in Aramaic (instead of Hebrew) because this was the spoken language at the time the Haggadah was written. To make it a genuine invitation, it is important that it is stated in a language that is understood.

Question to think about

Go around the table and ask people to share what it is in their lives that shows they are *truly* free?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

- 1.** Why is it important to share your Seder table with others from outside of your close family?
- 2.** Does matzah represent freedom or slavery to you?
- 3.** How does the Seder night connect you to other Jews?



Ma Nishtana – why is this night different?

There are four places in the Torah where it speaks of children asking questions about Pesach – and each of these four verses are the sources for the Four Children's questions. This inspired a tradition that the story of the Exodus from Egypt must be told, wherever possible, in response to the questions asked by children, and this is where the idea for the four questions in Ma Nishtanah comes from.

Question to think about

How is asking questions "an expression of faith"?
Doesn't it show a lack of faith?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. Why do you think we encourage children to ask questions on Seder night?
2. Are there any bad questions?
3. Do all questions have answers? What do we do when no one we know has the answer to a question?



Avadim Hayinu – we were slaves

This is the start of the act of Maggid – the actual telling of the story of the Exodus. It is also the start of the response to the questions asked in the Ma Nishtanah. Before we delve into the depths of the story of the Exodus itself, the Haggadah makes sure we realise how we are personally affected by this historical event. It reminds us that if not for the Exodus, we would still be slaves in Egypt! This passage also explains that the mitzvah of telling the story of Exodus is for everybody, (even the old and wise) and the story should be told at length to make it impactful.

Question to think about

Why do you think education has become so important in Judaism, and what impact has that had on Jewish history?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. Why does the Haggadah say, “We were slaves in Egypt”? Were you a slave in Egypt?
2. Do you like long stories? Why do you think the Haggadah tells us that the longer we make this story, the better?
3. Why does the Haggadah have to point out that old and wise people still have to do this mitzvah?



The Four Children

The section of the Four Children in the Haggadah is based on the four different verses in the Torah which describe children asking their parents about the story of the Exodus. Rather than seeing these as just four examples of asking the same question, the Rabbis noticed four distinctive personalities from the different ways the verses are phrased – and this inspired the idea for four kinds of children.

Question to think about

Why do you think Jews argue so much with each other?
Is this a strength or a weakness?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. Which of the four children are you most like (you can answer more than one)?
2. What do you see as the message of including four different children in the Haggadah? What advice would you give to a teacher or parent who has many different types of children to teach?
3. Why do you think that children are the central focus of such an important event as Seder night?



The Ten Plagues

One of the most exciting and colourful parts of the story of the Exodus is the Ten Plagues. There is a custom to spill a drop of wine as we say the name of each plague. There are many reasons given for this, but the most beautiful is that of Abudraham, (a 14th century Rabbi from Spain), who interprets it in accordance with the verse, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls" (Proverbs 24:17). We give thanks for the miraculous plagues which brought our ancestors out of Egypt and granted them freedom, but at the same time, we also shed a symbolic tear for those who suffered.

Question to think about

Do you think the plagues were from natural causes or supernatural intervention? Do you think they are any less impressive if God performed them through nature?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. Why do you think God chose these particular plagues?
2. Which do you think was the worst of the Ten Plagues?
3. Who were the plagues really for?



Dayeinu – it would have been enough

Dayeinu is a song which explores the kindnesses of God to His people on the long journey from slavery to freedom. There are fifteen stages described between leaving Egypt, reaching the Promised Land, and building the Temple in Jerusalem. This song is a tikkun, a “putting-right”, for the ingratitude of the Israelites in the Wilderness. At almost every stage of their journey they complained. It is as if we are saying where they complained, let us give thanks.

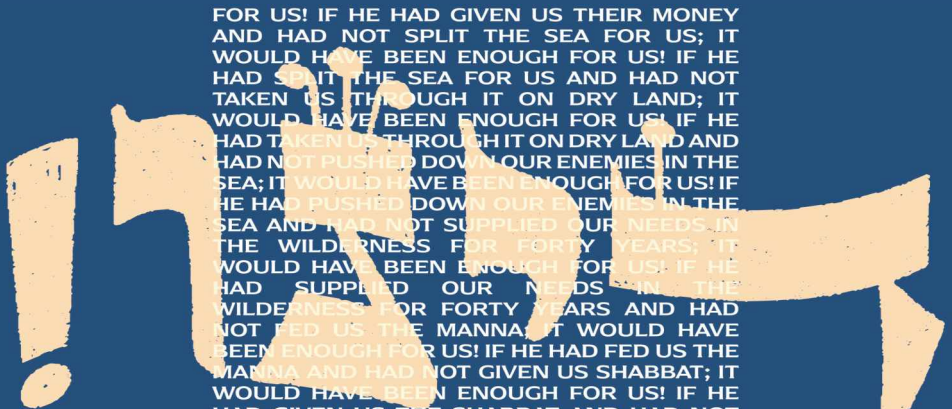
Question to think about...

Seder night is when we experience the Exodus, and Shabbat is when we experience freedom and utopia. Why do you think we need regular reminders of what freedom and utopia feel like?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. Would it really have been “enough” if God had stopped at any of these stages?
2. What do you see as the message behind listing the 15 stages in Dayeinu?
3. Where do you think the story of the Exodus actually ends?

FOR US! IF HE HAD GIVEN US THEIR MONEY AND HAD NOT SPLIT THE SEA FOR US; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE HAD SPLIT THE SEA FOR US AND HAD NOT TAKEN US THROUGH IT ON DRY LAND; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE HAD TAKEN US THROUGH IT ON DRY LAND AND HAD NOT PUSHED DOWN OUR ENEMIES IN THE SEA; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE HAD PUSHED DOWN OUR ENEMIES IN THE SEA AND HAD NOT SUPPLIED OUR NEEDS IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE HAD SUPPLIED OUR NEEDS IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS AND HAD NOT FED US THE MANNAN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE HAD FED US THE MANNAN AND HAD NOT GIVEN US SHABBAT; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE HAD GIVEN US THE SHABBAT AND HAD NOT BROUGHT US CLOSE TO MOUNT SINAI; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US! IF HE



Pesach, Matza, Maror

These are the three mitzvot on Seder night which involve eating. Although we no longer eat the Pesach sacrifice, back when there was a Beit HaMikdash this was a biblical command. Normally, mitzvot are fulfilled by performing the required act with kavanah, with the intention of observing the commandment. To fulfil the duty of succah, for example, we do not have to tell the story of the wandering of the Israelite in the desert. We just have to plan to sit in the succah, and then we sit and say the brachah there. However, in the case of Pesach two commands coincide: the first, to eat the festive meal; the second, to tell the story. Rabban Gamliel argues that the two are connected. The story explains the food; the food allows us to relive the story.

Question to think about...

Why is it important to remember and experience both slavery and freedom on this night?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. What is special about the educational methods used at the Seder table?
2. Do any other chaggim have a similar aspect to them?
3. Do you think our schools and other educational institutions can learn anything from the way we learn and teach on Seder night?



Hallel

At this stage in the Seder, we have finished telling the story of the Exodus, and just like the Israelites 3,300 years ago, we feel an overwhelming need to thank and praise Hashem for bringing us out of Egypt. So we begin to say Hallel (which is split into two sections, half before the meal and half after). This is one of the transitional moments of the Haggadah, when we move from story to song, from prose to poetry, from recitation (Maggid) to praise (Hallel).

Question to think about...

How does music change the experience of our prayers and the way we praise God?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. What do we have to praise and thank God for on Pesach?
2. Is it better to use our own words to do this, or using the words of someone else (like by reciting King David's Tehillim)?
3. Do you connect more to words or song as a medium for expressing emotions?



Nirtzah

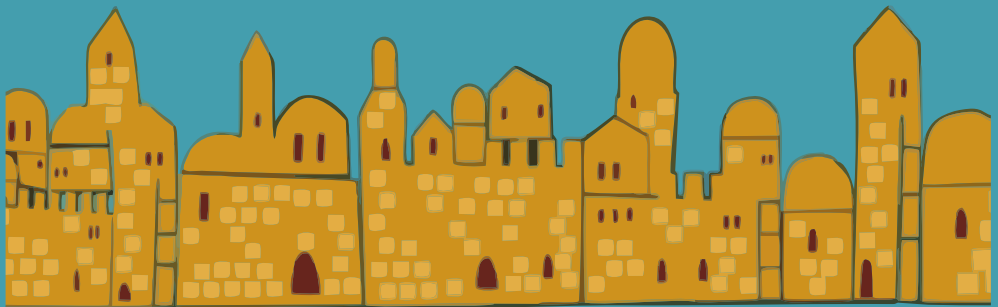
Nirtzah means parting, and with this passage we reach the concluding section of the Haggadah. We pray that next year we may be able to celebrate it in a rebuilt Temple according to the original biblical rituals (which we can no longer fulfil).

Question to think about...

Why do you think that both of these important days in the Jewish calendar (Yom Kippur and Seder night) finish with these words about Jerusalem?

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

1. Do you think Jews in Israel should still say this at the end of their Seder?
2. What does Jerusalem have to do with the Exodus story and Seder night?
3. Has anyone around your Seder table celebrated Pesach in Israel? Was it special or different?



לשנה הבאה בירושלים



Chad Gadya – One Goat

This strange and haunting song seems simple on the surface but has hidden depths. Concluding one of Judaism's most important evenings of the year with a children's song tells us a lot about how important children are, especially on this night. The Jewish love of, and focus on, children means that we look forward to the future even more than we look back to the past. Just as we began the Seder with the questions of a child, so we end it with a 'nursery rhyme', reminding ourselves that what sustains a faith is not strength or power, but its ability to inspire successive generations of children to add their voices to their people's song.

Questions to Think About (and Ask) at your Seder

- 1.** Why do you think we end the Seder with a song for children?
- 2.** How do you think the message of the song is connected to the Seder night?

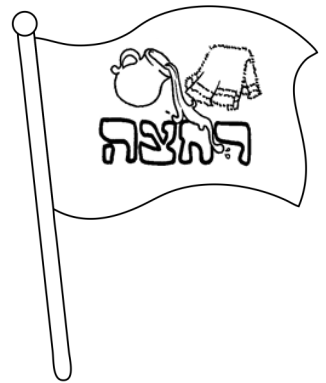


Kadesh U'rchatz flags

These are great flags that can be given out at the beginning of the Seder to everyone around the table. When you sing the song at the beginning of the Seder, whoever has that flag, has to wave it when it is mentioned in the song. Also, as the Seder progresses, whenever that part of the Seder is reached, the person holding the flag has to wave it. This is a great way to keep the kids (especially) attentive and engaged.

There is a wonderful kit you can buy that includes these flags plus other such great Seder ideas – see the link here - <http://tiny.cc/li9uwz>

If you want to make your own flags, print off the picture from here, <http://tiny.cc/9i9uwz>, cut them out and stick each stage of the Seder onto a skewer...hey presto, your Seder flags!





TRUTH OR



BLUFF

Read the word at the top in bold, followed by the five definitions. The people at the table have to decide which definition is the true one (T), and which ones are the bluff ones (B). Intersperse these throughout the Seder – some can be done on the first night, and some on the second.

Take a poll to see who thinks which answer is which and see who gets it correct.

NACHSHON

1. Nachshon was the Egyptian Sheep-God worshipped in Northern Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The reason the children of Israel were told to take a lamb was to show that they were not afraid of the Egyptian gods. **(B)**
2. Nachshon is the name given by Persian Jews to a ceremony before Pesach involving the community burning all their bread together in the village or town square. **(B)**
3. Nachshon was Pharaoh's lead magician of Egypt who tried to show that he could match Gods miracles. When Moses first visited Pharaoh, he turned his rod into a snake. Nachshon also made a stick turn into a snake but Moses' snake ate Nachshon's snake. **(B)**
4. Nachshon was the leader of the tribe of Judah at the Exodus. When the Jews gathered at the red sea, it is said that the waters did not split immediately. Instead, Nachshon jumped in to show his faith and then the waters split. **(T)**
5. When the Jews left Egypt, they were given gold jewellery by the Egyptians. This was later used to make the golden calf and is known as the "Nachshon" - what we would call a ransom. It is a custom for some Hungarian Jews to place all their family jewellery on the seder table as a symbol of the Nachshon. **(B)**

SICHON

1. Sichon is the ceremony carried out by Iraqi and Afghanistani Jews before they sing the song Dayenu when they hit each other on the back with Spring Onions. Some say this is a symbol of the Egyptian taskmasters who uses to whip the Jewish slaves. Others say it is because when the Jews complained about the manna, they compared it to the juicy Egyptian onions they used to eat. **(B)**
2. Sichon was a king of the Amorites and refused the children of Israel passage through his land. As a result all his cities were conquered. **(T)**
3. Picture yourself in an Ethiopian Falasha village in the build-up to Passover. Two days before Passover begins you are called to the outside of the village elders hut where you asked to carry out Sichon. This means you must break all your plates and bowls so you cannot use them during Pesach. If you refuse you are expelled from the village until the following Passover. **(B)**
4. The Sichon district in Kathmandu in Nepal is host every year to what is regarded as the largest seder anywhere in the world. **(B)**
5. Sichon is the ceremony carried out by Iraqi and Afghanistani Jews before they sing the song Dayenu when they hit each other on the back with Spring Onions. Some say this is a symbol of the Egyptian taskmasters who uses to whip the Jewish slaves. Others say it is because when the Jews complained about the manna they compared it to the Egyptian onions they used to eat. **(B)**



MOFLETTA

1. Mofletta is a thin pancake or crepe made from water, flour and oil. It is usually served warm, spread with butter, honey, syrup or jam and is eaten during the Mimouna celebration which North African Jews hold the day after Pesach. **(T)**
2. The Indian Jews of Cochin take Passover very seriously. So seriously they start their preparations straight after Chanukah and ferociously search for any item that may be chametz. Although they eat rice on Passover, every grain of rice has to be checked by women with razor sharp eyesight to make sure there are no cracks in the grains. These women and the whole business of checking are both called Mofletta. **(BLUFF but jews of cochin do do this)**
3. Mofletta was the name of the daughter of Pharaoh who was bathing and found the baby Moses in the bulrushes in the river Nile and raised him in the Palace. **(B)**
4. Mofletta or Mufaletta is an Italian custom during the seder meal. Whilst we will open the door for Elijah, the Italian sephardi jews would roll out a red carpet and leave a seat at the table for Elijah which they decorate with beads. After the meal they go into the streets and shout out "Mofaletta, Mufaletta, Mofletta!" which literally means "the bringer", as it is thought Elijah will reappear just before the arrival of the Messiah. **(B)**
5. Mofletta is the name given to kosher for passover food which has been accidentally made not kosher for passover. If a rabbi rules that something is Mofletta you must get rid of it immediately. **(B)**



OSHI MASOZGOSHAHAK

1. We eat egg and saltwater as a traditional starter to our Seder meal but the Jews from Bucharria (in Russia near Azerbaijan) also eat a traditional soup in the seder meal they call the "Oshi Masozgoshak" made with egg, matzahs, and meat. **(T)**
2. The oshi masozgoshak is the Yiddish pronunciation of what Talmud scholars would now call in Hebrew, oseh ma'aseh Goshen (the creator of the work in Goshen). This is a term used for God to recognise that he is not only the creator of good but the creator of the terrible work the Jews had to endure in building the store city of Goshen in Egypt. **(B)**
3. No, that's not right, the oshi masozgoshak is the name of both a famous Yeshiva in Hungary and the shorter form of Haggadah that was produced by it and sent to towns and villages in Poland in the 19th century, for people who were worried during the time of the pogroms that they would show themselves as jews if they stayed up all night for the full Haggadah. **(B)**
4. In the kabbalistic tradition, the oshi masozgoshak are the 3 companions who journey with Elijah and accompany him as he visits seder tables around the world. They are all people who the Torah appears to indicate that they did not die but were taken away by Hashem – they are Enoch, Judah and Joshua. **(B)**
5. Oshi Masozgoshak is a kabbalistic expression but it means the 10 paths of righteousness which a Jew may follow. This is based on the idea that the Red Sea actually split into 10 separate paths, one for each tribe and retreated in front of them with each step. **(B)**



SEHARANE

1. Seharane is the name given by Moroccan and Libyan Jews to the customary song on the second day of Pesach when we stop praying for rain and begin to pray for dew. **(B)**
2. In 14th century Spain the leader of the seder would before saying Ha Lachma anya (this is the bread of affliction), walk around the table, tapping a piece of matza 3 times on each person's head saying Seharane Seharane Seharane. The taps would get harder with each person! **(Bluff** ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT JEWS FROM THIS PERIOD WOULD WALK AROUND AND TAP THE SEDER PLATE ON GUESTS HEADS THREE TIMES)
3. Picture yourself in a Jewish Kurdish Village before the 1950s and Pesach has just ended. Your family are packing up as it is time to observe the Seharane, a nature festival starting the day after Pesach. Communities would leave their villages and go camping for several days celebrating with nature walks and singing and dancing. When the community relocated to Israel in the 1950s, the festival stopped being observed. There have been attempts to resurrect it but due to the widespread celebration of Mimouna in Israel, the Seharane has been moved to the middle of Sukkot. **(T)**
4. Seharane is a Gibraltar custom of mixing the dust from actual bricks into their charoset to make it really authentic. The bricks are smashed whilst chanting "Avadim Hayinu" (we were slaves) to a tune also called the Seherane. **(Bluff** BUT SOME GIBRALTTAR JEWS DO MIX REAL BRICK DUST IN WITH THEIR CHAROSET!)
5. The Seherane was the name of the great Rabbi who is believed to have compiled the Haggadah – whilst prayers differ amongst jews around the world, uniquely the Haggadah is the same for all jews from all countries. Not much is known about the Seherane – it is believed he was exiled to Babylon after the destruction of the first temple and founded the school where the Babylonian Talmud was compiled. **(B)**



PAN DE SEMITA

1. Pan decemita - is the tenth bite of matza taken by Jews from Spanish countries, including Peru and Argentina, during the seder. Because the number ten is significant in Judaism (ten commandments etc) a special prayer is read at this point followed by the leader asking the following questions and everyone shouting the answers: **(i)** Who are You? We are the Jews. **(ii)** Where are you coming from? We come from Egypt. **(iii)** where are you going? To Jerusalem. **(B)**
2. Pandesemita - is the name of a remote group living in Jurgesoft in Finland that have claimed to be one of the lost tribes of Israel. Their claim is based on the fact that they celebrate a form of Passover by not eating bread for 8 days around Easter and observe new year in September. They are not accepted as Jews by the rabbinic authorities. **(B)**
3. Pan de semita is the name given by some southern Italian Jews to the last bread eaten before Pesach. A festive meal is held before the fast of the first born - half the bread must be eaten and the other half burnt. **(B)**
4. Pan de semita literally means Semitic bread. It was eaten first in Spain but is still eaten at Passover time in Mexico and by Mexican-Americans along the Texas border. Some historians believe this population originated from a group which escaped from the Spanish inquisition. Pan de semita is unleavened bread made by combining two cups of flour, one half cup of water and a few tablespoons of olive oil. Mexicans say that pork lard is prohibited, hence the name, "Semitic." The same recipe is used in Calabria, in the deep south of Italy and is called "pane azimo." **(T)**
5. Pan de semita - is a type of Pesach cake filled with jam which is popular amongst the Jews of El Salvador and Guatemala. Extreme caution has to be taken that the pastry does not rise - so great skill is required to cook it, a chef who has learned to make pan de semita is required to also learn a song called somacho semita somacho semita. **(B)**



ASHURA

1. Ashura is a special fast day observed by Sunni Muslims on the 10th day of the month of Muharram. The fasting is to commemorate the day when Moses and his followers were saved from Pharaoh by Allah by creating a path in the Red Sea. According to Muslim tradition, the Jews of Medina used to fast on the tenth day to observe the Passover. **(T)**
2. Contrary to what you have just heard, Ashura is the name of a midwife mentioned in the Torah. When Pharaoh wanted to kill the Jewish boys he asked two midwives to help him (but of course they did not) –their names were Shifrah and Ashura. **(B)**
3. Ashura was the God of the Nile worshipped by the Egyptians as it was the floods from the Nile that were needed to water their fields. It is a little known fact that because Moses stayed afloat in the Nile and was rescued as a baby, he did not perform the miracle of turning the Nile waters into blood? Instead, Aaron held the rod over the waters of the Nile. **(B)**
4. In some communities to this day, when a woman is pregnant it is announced to the family by passing the seder plate around her head twice at the Passover meal. **(B)**
5. ASHURA was Moses's wife. She was the daughter of Jethro, a priest Of Midian - Moses stayed with them after fleeing Egypt when he killed a taskmaster. It is thought that as Jethro and Ashura lived in the land of Cush (now in Ethiopia) they were both black. **(B)**

A variation on TRUE or BLUFF is the following:

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

At the beginning of the Seder, ask everyone to come up with three statements about themselves, all relating to Passover. But only two should be true. Invite everyone to share their three at any point in the Seder, and everyone else has to guess which is the false statement.

THE TEN PLAGUES

Capture the attention of those at your Seder table, especially the kids, with these great props to recreate the plagues.

1) Blood - Fill a jug or glass with red food colouring and when reading out the plagues add some water and hey presto! you've got blood free blood. Unlike the plague, this water is drinkable, see who will take a gulp!

2) Frogs - Jumping frogs are available from your local, or online toy shop and would be great for everyone to have a go to see who can get theirs further as we reach plague number 2.

For those with a bit more energy, have a hop and a croack around the dining room!

3) Lice - Try and find some plastic bugs from your nearest toy merchant or throw some confetti! But don't forget, what goes down, must be cleaned up!

4) Wild Animals - Buy or make some masks to put on when reaching plague number 4. Print a lion mask here <http://tiny.cc/lh9uwz>

5) Pestilence - Set up some plastic cows, sheep and horses and topple them over.

6) Boils - The boils brought the great itch across Egypt, so have a good scratch!

7) Hail - You see table tennis balls, we see hail!!! Alternatives could be marshmallows or cotton balls.

8) Locusts - You could either use some plastic props or hop around mimicking these pesky insects.

9) Darkness - Use sleeping masks or blindfolds to recreate this plague. Have a wander around, but try not to knock over the wine!

10) Firstborns & Crossing the Sea - The tenth plague was the killing of the first born and this may be a bit too macabre to recreate.

After the Israelites left Egypt they crossed the Red Sea, so walk through the curtains, or hold up some sheets to recreate this momentous occasion.



STORIES AND INSIGHTS

1) The transmission of the Exodus story

The sign proclaimed "International Holocaust Survivors Meeting." The hall was filled with elderly delegates from all over the globe, many confined to wheelchairs and accompanied by nurses. From the podium, chairman Zalman, a silver-haired gentleman in his early 90s, addressed the assembly:

"My fellow survivors, this may be our last meeting. The number of remaining survivors has diminished as the last of us reaches our 90s. The 'revisionist historians' who deny the Holocaust ever happened are sprouting worldwide, and in a very short time there will be no one left to confront them with personal experience."

The audience was very agitated. "What can we do?" they asked. "We've already committed our collective experiences to a 1,000-page volume, in addition to the many videos in existence. What else can we do to ensure that future generations are aware of the Holocaust?"

A trembling voice was heard from the back of the room, as a lady with shimmering white hair by the name of Shirley slowly cleared her throat. "I have a suggestion. In order for the future generations to recall and internalize our experiences, it isn't sufficient to write a book to collect dust in the library. We must create tangible reminders that our descendants can relate to. I have the three following suggestions:



1. That a reminder of the Holocaust be posted on every doorpost, to remind us every time we enter and exit our homes.
2. Every day we don a yellow armband with the star of David for 10 minutes to internalize the message.
3. On Holocaust Day we do more than just stand in silence. Let us make our homes resemble a concentration camp. Remove all the furniture to the garage and sit on the floor. Eat potato peels (the delicacy of the camps) and then read the commemorative book! If all future generations will follow these guidelines, I am certain that our national history will be passed on.

TRANSMISSION OF HISTORY

On the night of the Passover Seder we transmit our history to the next generation. The reminder on the doorpost is the Mezuzah, the yellow armband is the tefillin, and the potato peels are the matzah.

By reliving the story of the Exodus we internalise the message to all future generations. That is why the Passover Seder is the centre point of the Jewish calendar, and celebrated by the vast majority of the Jewish people worldwide. We must try to understand the importance this great event represents to our national development, in order to understand the value in its transmission.

2) THEME OF FREEDOM

People are willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of freedom. Wars are waged for freedom. Animals in the zoo would also prefer to be out of the cage, as wild beasts of prey. But the Jewish concept of freedom is somewhat different...

Scenario 1: The First Seder Night in Egypt

After spending all week circumcising his sons, learning the laws of slaughtering and sacrificing animals, and baking proper matzah, David must now don his cloak and belt, and with his shoes on and staff in hand, eat the Pascal lamb with matzah and bitter herbs "in a hurry." Does this sound like "freedom"?

Scenario 2: A Modern Seder

The father comes home from shul and sits at the table. "It says in the Haggdah to dip, so let's dip! Now it says to break the matzah."

His wife pops up, "But my father didn't do it that way!"

"Okay, so we'll do it his way. Now it says pour the wine."

The son pops up, "My teacher said do it a different way!"

"Okay, we'll do it that way!"

So... is this the feeling of "born free"?

Question: What is the Jewish concept of freedom?

Answer: Our sages proclaim there can be no freedom without Torah. When we give in to our whims, we are enslaved. Is a drug addict free? How about a TV addict? One can even be enslaved by a telephone! ("Wait -- I gotta answer the phone!")

Freedom means being free from the yoke of physical drives or the rule of man, to be able to perform the will of God. By relating to the Almighty we elevate our existence above the physical, animal realm. That is the Jewish concept of freedom.

2) "THE POOR BREAD"

The opening passage of the Haggadah begins with the words, "This is the poor bread that our ancestors ate in Egypt." But there is an older text which states, "This is like the poor bread." What changed?

"What luck," exclaimed Jacob, as he counted the first thousand dollars he'd ever earned. "If I invest this money and make a profit, it will be the end of these rags and stale bread!" Eventually Jacob became a multi-millionaire. However, in order to retain a sense of appreciation, he would celebrate his good fortune one day each year by donning old rags and eating stale bread, to remember the difficult times. He would then consume a sumptuous feast and give presents to all of his children. His young children always looked forward to that day when their father would dress up in rags...

Until the day when Jacob began losing money. First a little, then a little more, until he had lost his entire fortune. He then donned rags and took stale bread in his hand. When his children saw, they were happy: "Celebration day has arrived!" they squealed. With disappointment, Jacob informed them that now it was for real.

The Jews were slaves in Egypt and life was bitter, but the Almighty took us out and brought us to the Holy Land flowing with milk and honey. Surrounded by the luxury of Jerusalem in Temple times, we still remembered our bondage in Egypt. Thus the original text: "This is like the poor bread our ancestors endured in Egypt." But once our Temple was destroyed and we are poor again, we can now proclaim: "This is the poor bread."

3) THE FOUR SONS

Yankel came from Poland. He wore a beard, kept Shabbat, and celebrated Passover with wine, matzah and the whole works.

His son Jack worked on Shabbat, but as long as his father was alive he attended the family Seder. When Yankel died there was no more Seder.

Jack's son Marvin asked, "What's this?" -- i.e. Why is it that when Grandpa was alive we had a Seder and now we don't? His son Trevor never even participated in a Seder so he didn't even know what to ask. These are the four sons of the Seder. (Tragically, the fifth son doesn't even come to the Seder..)

4) THE TEN PLAGUES

The custom is to pour 10 drops of wine from our cups when reciting the plagues, to indicate sorrow that our enemies had to suffer. (There was once a miser who would spill the 10 drops from his cup into his wife's cup, and then she would do the same into his cup!)

Every plague had an aspect of "measure-for-measure," which is how the Almighty evens the score in the world:

1) Blood: The Jews would drink fresh water from the Nile. The Egyptians would drink blood. "Give me that glass, Jew!" cried Muchmad. But when he drank, it turned into blood. "Refill the glass and let's drink at the same time!" ordered Muchmad. But even now, the Jew drank water and the Egyptian drank blood.

We all live in our separate worlds, and in the Egyptians' world it was blood. Only by paying money could the Egyptian get water. "That will be £100, please!"

2) Frogs: Pharaoh sealed his palace frog-proof and posted a big sign: "No frogs allowed!" When the swarms of frogs banged on his window, he sat nonchalantly on his throne. The frogs then went into a huddle: "We have to do something!" One little frog decided to get into the pita that was baked for Pharaoh daily. He jumped into the kneading trough and then into the dough. As the frog was put into the furnace, he prayed, and miraculously survived the heat.

When Pharaoh began to eat, the frog jumped into his stomach and wildly started croaking. Pharaoh yelled for help, opened the palace windows, and in came hopping all the frogs.

3) Lice: Egypt's magicians, who were so far able to duplicate the miracles of Moses, were dumbfounded. How can (what they thought was) the "black magic" of Moses have effect on such tiny creatures? They were forced to admit it was the finger of God.

The above three plagues were measure-for-measure, in that the Egyptians would not allow the Jews to drink, sleep or bathe. The Egyptians now appreciated the difficulty of being deprived of water (blood), sleep (frogs) and a bath (lice).

All three plagues in this series take place at sea level (upon the Nile River bank and in the sands of Egypt.)

The Sages point out that the first three plagues were carried out only by Aaron, because Moses owed a debt of gratitude to the Nile for saving his life (the baby in the basket), and to the sands of Egypt for concealing the Egyptian he had killed years earlier (who had been beating a Jew).



4) Wild Animals: From the onset of the plagues, the Jews were switched from working on the pyramids to doing domestic labor. "Morris! Take my children for a picnic in the park!" When the plague of wild animals struck (lions and tigers and bears -- oh my!), Morris and the Egyptian kids were eating their picnic lunch. When Morris returned home alone, the frantic parents inquired, "Where are our children?" To which Morris replied, "One was eaten by an elephant, another by a boa constrictor, and I also saw some wolves and bears having a feast, but they didn't touch the sandwiches."

5) Cattle Plague: The pride of Egypt was their world-famous horses and livestock. When they all suddenly dropped dead in the fields (those in the barns were spared) -- except for the livestock of the Jews -- the Egyptians started to ponder things more seriously...

6) Boils: Three of the plagues were performed by Aaron, three by Moses, and three directly by God. The plague of boils was the only one that was done by all three. Moses and Aaron both filled their fists with soot from the furnace, and then Moses miraculously took all four fistfuls into one fist and tossed it up to the sky, where God spread it throughout the entire Land of Egypt, causing boils to erupt on the Egyptians' bodies.

The measure-for-measure of this second series of three plagues was that the Egyptians had forced the Jews to risk their lives hunting for them (wild beasts), attending to their livestock (cattle plague), and would constantly beat them until their bodies were covered with sores (boils). This second series of plagues occurred at ground level.

7) Hail: Although it rarely rains in Egypt (the Nile periodically overflows enough for the Egyptians to water their crops), Moses predicted fire-entrapped hail (a natural contradiction) and even warned the Egyptians to bring their remaining livestock and servants indoors. Those who feared the Almighty took them inside, while those who didn't pay attention to His word (teaching us that the definition of fearing God is taking His word seriously) kept them outdoors, and when the hailstorm came (except for the land of Goshen) all was destroyed. Only the wheat and spelt that were not yet fully ripened (so as to bend in the hailstorm, instead of breaking) were spared.

This led the Egyptians to ask, "Why didn't your great Deity wait for the wheat to be hard and break as well?" The answer: "He had to leave something for the locusts to eat!"

8) Locusts: The locusts swarmed down from the sky after being transported by a strong easterly wind. They covered the entire land and consumed whatever the hail had spared. Pharaoh hurried to summon Moses and begged him to stop the plague.

Question: Why was Pharaoh in such a rush?

Answer: Pharaoh wanted the plague stopped before the locusts could lay eggs and doom the future crops as well.

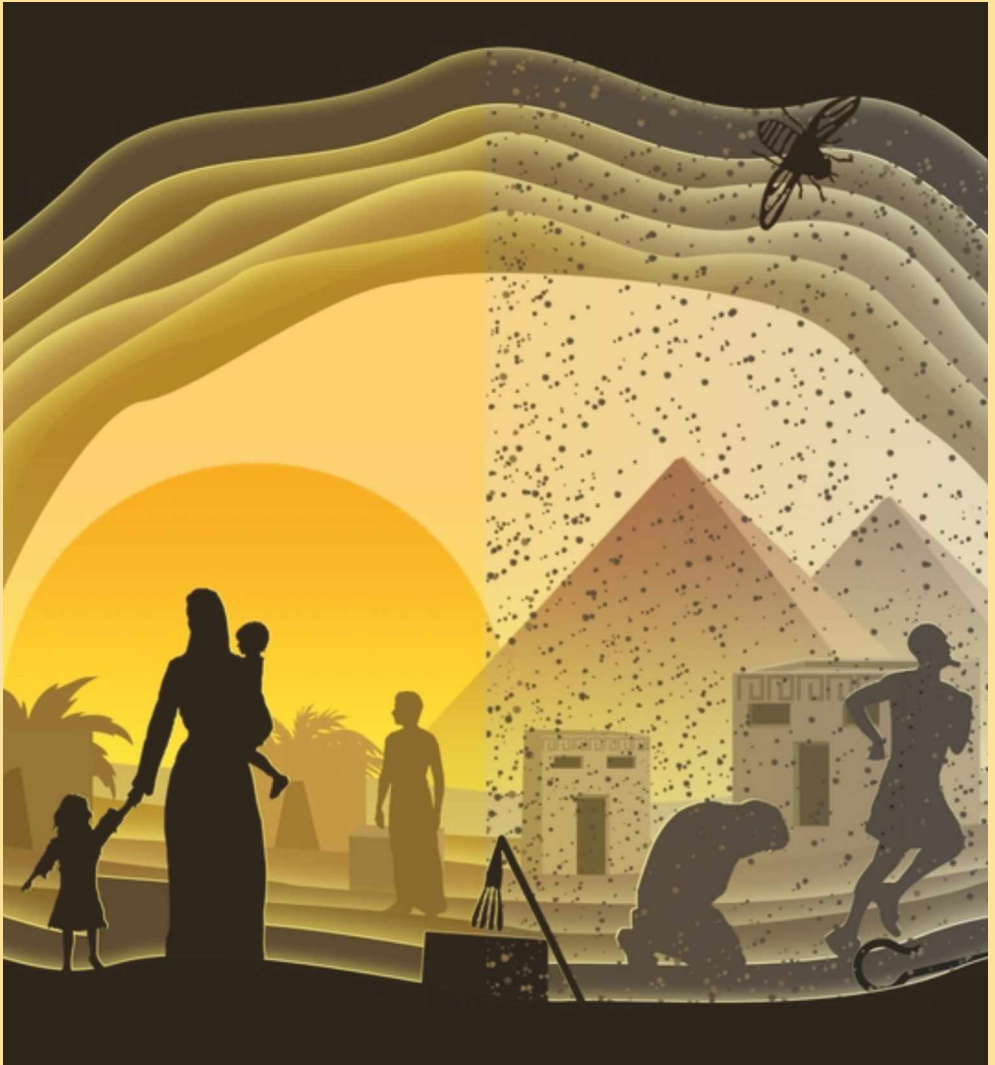
The Egyptians, lacking anything else to eat, figured they might as well eat the locusts (and it is a delicacy in Egypt until today). They froze, pickled and preserved locust. They canned, bottled, and salted locust. What happened next? A westerly wind suddenly came and transported all the locusts (including the preserved ones) into the Red Sea.

9) Darkness: For three straight days the Egyptians couldn't see, and for three additional days the darkness was so thick that they couldn't move. They were literally "glued to their spots" and could not eat, drink, sleep, or even use the facilities. During these days the Jews (who could see) searched for the Egyptians' homes for hidden wealth, to prevent them from later claiming poverty.

The measure-for-measure here is that the Egyptians had forced the Jews to tend their crops (locusts), stoned them with rocks (hail), and chained them to the wall in dark dungeons (darkness). This third series of three plagues came from the sky.

10) FIRST BORN: The Almighty Himself descended on Egypt (i.e. a revelation of the Divine presence), and the first-borns, who are more spiritually attuned, were killed by the overdose. The miracle was that the Jewish first-borns were not killed, which is why even today they fast (or complete a tractate of Talmud) on the day before Pesach.

This plague was announced in advance: God refers to the Jewish people as His "first born" (Exodus 4:22), and Pharaoh was immediately informed of the consequences that his first born will die.



5) Natan Sharansky is a hero of the Jewish people. Growing up in the Soviet Union, when it was almost impossible to live a Jewish life, he knew the term "Jew" only as something to hide. But then in 1967, following Israel's dramatic victory in the Six-Day War, Jews began to reconnect to their ancestral faith with pride. Many began to dream of returning to their homeland but were prevented by the Soviet authorities. They became known as refuseniks. Sharansky, who was arrested at the age of 29 for his Zionist activities, was arguably the most famous refusenik, with thousands of people campaigning for his release from the Soviet Gulag prison system in Siberia. He gained his freedom in 1986 and realised his lifelong dream to immigrate to the State of Israel.



At the beginning of the coronavirus global pandemic, when many Jews around the world were facing the notion of a Pesach Seder without their family around the table for the first time, he was interviewed about his experience of Pesach in the Gulag. The Soviet authorities knew the importance of Seder night, and cruelly ensured that Sharansky was in solitary confinement, where he was served nothing but three pieces of dry bread and three cups of water per day.

"I decided my three cups of water would be my wine and my three pieces of dry bread would be my matzah," Sharansky recalled. "And my salt would be my maror. I found out that this is the great place to feel the unique struggle of the Jewish people – to be connected with every Jew in the world, and to enjoy thinking that this year we are slaves and next year we [will be] free people in Jerusalem."

Sharansky concluded his interview by emphasising that even if we are not with our family on Seder night, we are still connected, for we are one big family, a people with a shared history, a shared future and a very special role in this world.

THE WISE SON

He wants to know everything: all categories of mitzvot, testimonies (laws of historical meaning), statutes (that we don't fully understand) and civil law. It's a pleasure to teach someone thirsty for knowledge. They eat up every word. Teach him all the laws of "Seder night" up until the last one: we do not eat after the Afikoman. (In order to keep the taste of Passover in your mouth, to continue discussing the Exodus all night long.)

THE EVIL SON

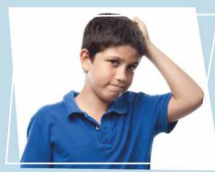
He doesn't ask a question, but makes a statement: "What's all this business for you? What's the purpose of all these meaningless rituals?" He excludes himself from the people, so we "knock out his teeth!" (Don't allow him to eat our roasted lamb, so his teeth "stand on edge"!) We don't even address him directly, but turn to the other sons and proclaim, "God performed these miracles for me"; "me and not him" -- had he been there he would have remained in Egypt. (Indeed, 80 percent of the Jewish people became so assimilated that they never left Egypt.)

THE SIMPLE SON

He asks a simple question and receives a plain reply. Don't overcomplicate issues if you want to be understood.

THE SON WHO DOESN'T ASK

Marvin is sitting quietly, minding his own business, and the Torah commands us to approach him and tell him of the Exodus. This is the source of our obligation, because the other sons who asked would receive a reply in any case. What can we accomplish with such an ignorant Jew? We must get him to ask, to arouse him to be bothered by the basic questions of life and Judaism. Then he will seek out the answers on his own.



All the following have been taken from **Seed's 'Benny & Bella's Seder Adventure'** that can be purchased from the Seed office. The following are broken into three categories **ACTIVITIES, BRAIN TEASERS** and **WORD PUZZLES**. They can be interspersed at any point of the Seder.

ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more people to do the following:

- 1)** Without sound effects, act out the splitting of the Red Sea for everyone to guess.
- 2)** Try to karate chop a matzah into two pieces exactly the same size.
- 3)** You have 60 seconds to find a towel and wear it like an Egyptian headdress.
- 4)** Sing "ma nishtana" to the tune of "dayenu".
- 5)** Without sound effects, act out the plague of pestilence (animals dying) for everyone to guess.
- 6)** Choose a partner and act out a scene of slavery - one of you is a Jewish slave and the other is an Egyptian taskmaster.
- 7)** You have 60 seconds to find an unopened box of matzah.
- 8)** Sing your favourite Jewish song using a bottle of wine or grape juice as a microphone.
- 9)** Without sound effects, act out Moshe's staff turning into a snake for everyone to guess.
- 10)** Dance around the table singing "I'shana haba b'Yerushalayim".

BRAIN TEASERS

1) Would you rather be Avraham or Moshe and why?

2) Work out the number of forefathers + tribes of Israel x plagues

3) I am Aharon's brother and I have a staff. Who am I?

4) Why do we eat the korech sandwich?

5) Would you rather eat 10 matzot or drink 10 cups of wine and why?

6) Work out the number of lines in dayenu x books of the Torah - foremothers

7) I am the One who made the plagues and took the Jews out of Egypt. Who am I?

8) Why do we drink four cups of wine?

9) Would you rather live in Israel or in England and why?

10) Work out the number of generations since Egypt + cups of wine ÷ tablets = ?

Avraham or Moshe

150 NUMBER PUZZLE

Moshe

To remember the way the pesach, matzah & maror were eaten together in the times of the Holy Temple



71 NUMBER PUZZLE

HASHEM

The four cups represent the four expressions of redemption - Hashem says: I will take you out, save you, redeem you and take you for Myself as a people



30 NUMBER PUZZLE

WORD PUZZLES

1) Explain the word WINE for everyone to guess without using actions or the following words: drink, four, cup, grape, juice

2) Complete the words: 4 C of W on S N

**4 cups of wine
on seder night**

3) Decipher this anagram: DEERS TIHGN

Seder Night

4) You have 10 seconds to name three words that rhyme with MAROR

BRAIN TEASER

5) Explain the word LEANING for everyone to guess without using actions or the following words: pillow, left, side, chair, matzah, wine

6) Complete this sentence: 3 M on the S P

**3 matzot on
the seder plate**

7) Decipher this anagram: SAJREEMLU

Jerusalem

8) You have 10 seconds to name three words that rhyme with SEDER

BRAIN TEASER

9) Explain the word AFIKOMAN for everyone to guess without using actions or the following words: hide, search, find, eat, end

10) Complete the words: E the P

Elijah the Prophet

FINAL IDEAS

1. GET RID OF THE CHAMETZ:

Print out a paper containing a little piece of bread before the Seder. Instruct all your participants that the person who has the chametz in their possession at the end of the Seder loses. Get the game started by sneaking it into someone's shoe or pocket. The fun begins.

2. HIDDEN QUESTIONS:

Why just search for the afikomen? Hide little question slips of paper around the room. When participants find them, they answer the question and receive a point for the correct answer. Whoever has the most at the end of the night is the winner.

3. THE SEARCH:

Beforehand, create a bunch of cards, each with a phrase from the Haggadah. Give out the cards at the beginning of the Seder, and instruct each participant to dance, cheer, or clap when their phrase appears.

4. REVERSE CHARADES:

Create a bunch of cards before the Seder, each with an action or noun related to Passover. (Ex: the Seder plate, making matzah.) Throughout the Seder, have participants leave the room, one at a time. Pick a card and pass it around for everyone else at your Seder. Call back the player, and have everyone act the card out: together, until that player guesses correctly.

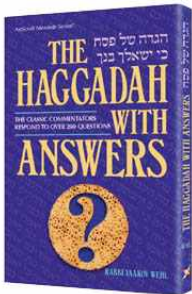


And finally....but probably most importantly....!

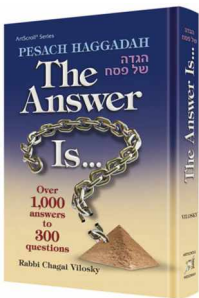
WHAT HAGGADAH TO BUY?

There are perhaps more options of haggadah to buy than any other Jewish book and the multitude of choices can be confusing. Here are (just) a few **Seed** recommendations.

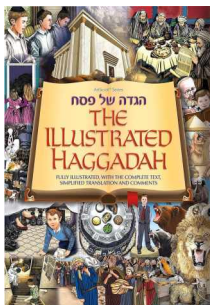
For more help choosing the right haggadah for you and your family please email aedwards@seed.uk.net



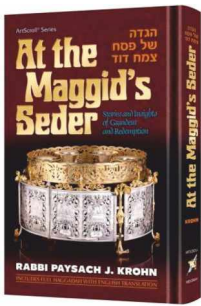
Here's a Haggadah guaranteed to transform your Seder into an evening of memorable understanding. Featuring over 200 thought-provoking questions and answers, this Haggadah draws from a wide range of classical sources to provide fascinating and substantive



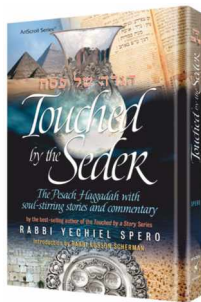
This is a Hagaddah that makes a Seder interactive... and unforgettable. We've got the wine, the matzah, the stunning table settings. Now, all that's missing to make the perfect Seder is... questions! Lots of questions! Chazal, the Jewish Sages, instructed.



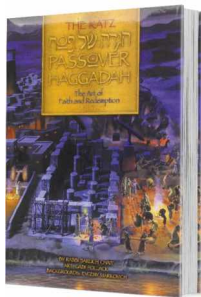
The Illustrated Haggadah gives us a wonderful way to bring the story of the creation of the Jewish nation to our families. It includes a simple and yet elegant translation with added words and phrases that clarify difficult passages; clear and easy-to-follow instructions; comments that can be shared and enjoyed by all at the Seder.



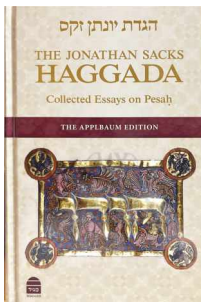
In *At the Maggid's Seder*, we are treated to Rabbi Krohn's incisive and absorbing comments on the Haggadah. And more: This unique commentary also includes close to 100 (!) stories, told in a way that only Rabbi Paysach Krohn call tell them.



Rabbi Yechiel Spero is the author of the very popular *Touched by a Story* series. He is a charismatic teacher and speaker - and it carries over to his writing. Add to that his extraordinary knack for choosing stories and ideas and presenting them with clarity and excitement.



Magnificent, beautiful, and dramatic--this haggadah is worthy of superlatives! The realistic illustrations will literally transport you back to Egypt, as it looked and felt during the Exodus. The torture our nation experienced, and the wonder of redemption are all captured in these life-like pictures. Experience the thrill of G-d's Redemption, the pain of our ancestors, and the magnitude of the Ten Plagues, in this remarkable haggadah.



The traditional texts are carefully balanced alongside the Chief Rabbi's contemporary ideas, in a modern and user-friendly design. With new interpretations and in-depth analyses of the Passover liturgy and rituals, Rabbi Sacks' style is engaging, intelligent, at times daring in its innovation, and always inspiring.

The Seed Seder Night Companion



Seed

Life tools for
Jewish Families

London Office

Mowbray House

58 - 70 Edgware Way

Middlesex HA8 8DJ

Tel: 020 8958 0820

e-mail: info@seed.uk.net



www.seed.uk.net



@seedfamilies

Manchester Office

Parkgates, Bury New Road

Prestwich, Manchester M25 0JW

Tel: 0161 792 4457

e-mail: info@seedmanchester.com



@seedfamilies



Seed UK

www.seed.uk.net

Registered Charity No. 1155460



Seed