

Creative Seders

What do you do to make your seder fun and meaningful for both children and adults?

Haggadah

- We have created our own Haggadah, called "The Homegrown Haggadah". Each year, (right after Purim) I start searching for new material to add. People love it because it's different each time. (Peter Eckstein)

Bedikat Chametz

- We turned it in to a kind of treasure hunt the kids "hide" some chomets, too. (Feygele Jacobs)

Biur Chametz

- My mother invented this brilliant minhag. We would toast Kasher l'Pesach marshmallows over the biur Chametz fire. This minhag is brilliant because you burn the chametz after you are no longer allowed to eat it, but can derive hana-a from the chametz (Sarah Jacobs)

Pre-seder

- My mother would keep us busy the afternoon before Pesach making joke afikoman presents for all of the guests. (Sarah Jacobs)
- Kids help cook, set the table, make place cards for guests, decorate the room, make posters showing the steps of the seder and put them up around the room (or watch Prince of Egypt) (Ken Richmond)
- have a job jar- each person picks out job: wash others hands, pour wine/grape juice, clear table after 1st course, hand out haggadahs, etc
- I ask my guests to make sure they eat before they come. This way participants can enjoy the seder and will enjoy dinner when it finally comes instead of inhaling it like starving hyenas. (Rachel Prero)
- when guests arrive we have a "Make Your Own Charoset" bar. Everyone gets a bowl with their name on it and we have lots of different chopped choices to choose from- dates, figs, apples, coconut, walnuts, almonds, pistachios, dried cherries, chocolate chips, smushed banana, craisins, raisins, mango, orange, strawberries, pomegranate, honey, cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, (spices of all sorts) wine, grape juice and anything else you could think of - and guests make their own Charoset to prepare for the Seder. Sometimes I ask them to drash on why they chose the ingredients they chose and what their choices teach us about slavery and

freedom. This also works well when you have guests with different nut and fruit allergies. (Melinda Panken)

- Setting the stage to encourage participation: do not have the beginning of seder at the table, but rather sit in living room or other room as space allows. In our house, we sit on the floor, symbolizing a Greek symposium on comfy pillows/stadium chairs, etc. Youngsters this way are not confined to the table and are free to get up and walk around (Gidon Isaacs).
- Decorate your home and dining area. Use backdrops and or wall hangings from Oriental Trading or Party City. Include pictures of plagues both modern and ancient, wild beasts, endangered species (Gidon Isaacs).
- Like Gidon, we start in the living room. Older folks sit on chairs, younger ones lounge on the floor. IT has completely changed the dynamic of our seder. Not only is it more comfortable than being squeezed into a small place at a table, it has facilitated interaction and discussion during the seder. (Alan Divack)
- We also decorate the door btw living room and dining room with red crepe paper. For an older crowd (our seders are this year will be teens and older) this facilitates a discussion about what going through this kind of passage means. (Alan Divack)

Ice Breakers/Games to Do During the Seder:

- *Passover Apples to Apples*: Give everyone 5-7 of the adjective cards (the red ones). People can put back ones they don't understand (e.g. if they are kids or not native English speakers). Have kids bring (or say on the spot) the name of a person in the Exodus story (e.g. Miriam), an aspect of Pesach (liberation), or a something on the seder table (e.g. Charoset). Then 5 or so people at the table pick the adjective card they think best describes it or which they are willing to make the case for (just like regular Apples to Apples, except backwards--or you could do it the regular way, with people getting a handful of noun cards specific to Pesach, and they'd have to pick the one that best goes with the adjective, but I think that's less interesting, and you'd have to make a special deck of red cards--the nouns--specific to Pesach). So, then you have people advocating in turn for why Miriam is "energetic", "weird", "old", "intense", or "enormous", e.g. --or, if you do it the regular way, why Moshe, charoset, liberation, parsley, and matzah are "weird". (Sue Fendrick)
- *Six Degrees of Sederation*: Have two bags--one has a bunch of papers or cards with Pesach-identified nouns (Moshe, charoset, liberation, Miriam, parsley...), and the other has a bunch of papers or cards with totally random things on it (the US Supreme Court, Nigeria, an iPhone, bananas, a rainbow flag, ice). Divide people into teams of 2-4. Each team picks one from each bag, and then everyone has one minute to come up with Six (or Fewer) Degrees of Sederation that connect the two.

E.g. Charoset and iPhone--that's easy, Apple/apple in one! Parsley and Nigeria...hmm, Nigeria is in Africa, Egypt is also in Africa, between Egypt and Israel is the Reed Sea, some say that dipping the parsley in salt water is symbolic of b'nei yisrael crossing the Reed Sea! (Sue Fendrick)

Kiddush

- similar to a Miriam's Cup ritual, have everyone pour a little of their "wine" into Elijah's Cup with a hope/prayer/wish for the next year (Jeremy Winaker)
- Give each guest 3 slips of paper: Comment, Question, Story. Tell them that each person needs to offer one of each during the seder, i.e. use up their coupons. It implicitly sets the tone of participation. Sometimes people will say, "I don't know if this is a comment or a question..." and it doesn't matter, we don't really collect the slips, but it works! (Sue Fendrick, who learned it from Asher and Rachel Tessler Lopatin)
- We sing a very enthusiastic "Hin'ni muchan umezuman" before each of the 4 cups, with lots of repeats, and a contest who can hold out the high note the longest, and balancing your wine cup on your hand or head (Ken Richmond/Shira Shazeer)
- Take a broom handle -- it's the staff of Moshe, which by a miracle has passed through the ages to our table. Have each person introduce the one to her/his right and say what you remember about her/him from when you left Egypt together! It's especially fun for the people who haven't met each other until a few minutes ago. (Jon Spira-Savett)
- We make up a big posterboard with the seder of the seder (Kadesh, Orchatz, etc. etc.) in boxes, and have stickable pieces with pictures (wine cup, washing cup, matzah, set table, etc.) for the kids to run up to place in the correct place when we get to that part of the seder. They like it - and it keeps them aware of where we are in the seder. (Bess Adler)
- Laminate order of seder cards for youngsters to hold up at appropriate part of seder or make a chart (like above) and have child place velcro marker or other marker at the appropriate point in seder (Gidon Isaacs).
- We put small objects on the side of each person's plate (e.g., a penny, a stone, a watch, a bottle cap, etc.), and we wait for one of the guests to ask something like "Why are these random things on our plates?" We say "That's exactly why- to get you to start asking questions and to start thinking about symbolism." Then (or later) we go around and each person has to relate it somehow to the Exodus story, to Passover, etc. (Sarah Bunin Benor)
- For the past 7 years or so, my husband and I have enhanced our seders with a social justice theme that relates somehow to the Exodus story. This has helped to engage guests, make the discussions more interesting, and lead people to action. Some of our past themes have included contemporary slavery, immigration, hunger, and the prison system. Before each cup of wine we discussed an aspect of that year's theme and/or an organization that's working toward change. For example, with slavery we

discussed slavery in 4 different countries; with hunger we discussed four different organizations that are dealing with hunger in different ways. With each theme we gave guests handouts including suggestions for letter writing campaigns, organizations to support, etc. (Sarah Bunin Benor)

- pass around a Miriam cup and fill it with water from our own goblets. As we pass it, each person says their Hebrew name (or, for non-Jews, any name that has meaning for them). Great way to get people to remember (and use) their Hebrew names,
- Right before Kaddesh each person fills their neighbors' cup with wine. It's our way of making community. (Peter Eckstein)

Karpas

- Karpas has to be more than parsley. Break out the carrots, celery - any p'ri adama. Consider bananas to dip in chocolate. (Paula Pepperstone)
- How about the fact that greens in salt water are like Moshe in the Nile? Start talking about where water and water-y things are throughout the Pesach story. Ask people to imagine that they are dipping in the sea as they start to cross. (Jon Spira-Savett)
- French fries worked really well for both karpas and munching. Added some sweet potato fries for added nutritional value. (French fry attachment in pesach cuisinart). (Beth Naditch)
- Eating appetizers at this point, and allowing people to munch as the seder continues adds so much! It eliminates a lot of the impatience with what's being done--so people are happier, and those who want a little more content are able to get it, because everyone else doesn't have to wait. (Elisa Koppel)
- Adding strawberries and chocolate. Keeps the questions going. Is dipping. Is appropriate for spring. And, come on--it's strawberries and chocolate! (Elisa Koppel)
- One year, we had a long discussion about celebratory meals, using the seder/symposium as a jumping off point. I asked people to re-imagine the feast if it was other cultures/contexts (medieval banquet, tea ceremony, five star french restaurant, Thanksgiving, tailgate, etc). We then honed in on American celebrations and what seder would look like if we were creating it today--what would the environment and the food courses be. I then brought it back to Karpas, asking them what the first course would be. We had a lively discussion of soup vs salad and then we voted on it. they chose soup! so now, we have soup (no matzaballs) with our karpas. everyone loves it--they get some more substantial food early in the seder--easily an hour or two before they use. Gives them a little more patience with the rest of the seder (Bonnie Zaben)
- Agree with the above on turning karpas into appetizers. We do elaborate platters of vegetables and herbs with a variety of dips. It is sort of like an Italian Pizimonio, if you have ever had that. We make the blessing over an herb in salt water, and then go crazy. The biggest hit at our table year after year has been the guacamole. We probably go through 8-10 avocados each night. Since we eat kitniyot, the bissli bamba dipped in that horrid Israeli chocolate spread are a big hit with kids of all ages. Also popular are mini-roasted potatoes and steamed artichokes with an aioli sauce. This year I am thinking of doing a Burmese platter one night. (Very topical in

terms of the turn to freedom in that country.) They have a variety of cooked and fresh vegetables with spicy sauces. Most are not Pesach friendly, but a sauce of pureed roasted chili, tomato and shallot would be. (Alan Divack)

Yachatz

- Yachatz is like dividing the red sea ("the waters were a wall for them"). Give each half of the middle matza to a kid, have one by the leader and ask the other to go as far away as they think the sea split wide! (Jon Spira-Savett)

Magid

- Dayeinu Remix - Write your own list of things you are grateful for, to be sung by one or alternating/several family members. The "It Would Have Been Enough" list can be genuine and sincere, or poke some fun (depending on the audience). Also, challenge everyone to add a line or two - on the spot, in the proper tune - at the close of the song. Gets people thinking of the accomplishments and blessings of the past year, while accentuating a fantastic musical highlight of the Seder! (S. Ehrlich)
- costumes - everyone gets a kaffiyah and a robe or something and then they "march out of Egypt" while they sing that song
- get anything from before to spark a question, answer it (with a bit of maggid), then (because the formal obligation has been fulfilled) pick and choose what works or is fun (no way you're not doing the Four Questions) (Jeremy Winaker)
- Have many types of Haggadot (from family to very ornate/colorful ones). Use different ones for different sections or do a scavenger hunt in them to find different parts, words or pictures of specific things. (Good for adults too.) (Deborah Fish Gordesky)
- Wish I could remember who I learned this from: Before the seder, have kids (supervised by bigger ones, and with some ground rules--don't go into anyone's bedroom, nothing breakable...) fill a big reuseable shopping bag with misc. objects from around the house, enough for at least all the seder participants. At some time during the Maggid, the bag gets passed around, and each person in turn takes an object out of the bag without looking, and says what is in the story of yetziat mitzrayim. E.g. "This is a bell that a little girl rang during the dancing at the Red Sea." People can get very creative about what something "is", e.g. go by shape rather than the object's literal nature. Pick someone guaranteed to get the ball rolling to start. Very meaningful and fun! (Sue Fendrick)
- Do some easy Bibliodrama-type activities. Ask one child to be Moses, one child to be Pharaoh, etc., and have them act out the Pesach story. Alternatively, ask each child questions and give him/her a chance to respond in character. For instance, ask "Pharaoh," "How did you feel when your house was filled with frogs? What did you do?" (Cara Weinstein Rosenthal)
- Two years ago I did this at the seder - it really spices things up. During yachatz I excused myself to the restroom, where I locked the door, and climbed out the window to the porch. There, I had my old beggar costume waiting for me. I quickly changed into it, and ran to the front door, where I listened carefully to my father's cue. (He was

in on it, too.) When I heard him yell, " Whoever needs a meal, come and join us," I banged on the door. Everyone screamed. Somebody opened the door, and I walked into the dining room and asked if I could join the seder. Everyone was in shock... And when I removed the costume they all were relieved and amused. A great way to bring the haggadah to life... (Sari M.)

- we ask our guests to bring a reading - in any language - to share and explain at the seder (Feygele Jacobs)
- To fulfill "chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo..." at the beginning of the Seder, announce that each person is the slave of the person on their right and the master of the person on their left. Provide a scallion (whip) at each place setting. This works best if you carefully consider the seating plan and creates a lot of fun interaction especially during Rachtzah and Shulchan Orech. (Alice Talmud)
- Past few years I made 'question cards' before Pesach which were just little pieces of paper with a question mark - anytime someone asked a question - anyone at the seder - any question - they got one. I told the kids they could hand them in on chol hamoed for a treat/present. I... also made exclamation mark cards - which were for answers offered to questions.
- For younger kids, you can create stations around the room -- for example, you can have different things they can choose to build pyramids out of (legos, blocks, lincoln logs, etc.). There can be a dress-up corner. If there are lots of younger kids and an older child who could use a break, there could be a story corner (with Passover books) where older children read to younger ones. At your table, you can give children sugar cubes to make a pyramid out of - or marshmallows and toothpicks. My sister-in-law (Stephanie Englander) last year made Pesach bingo boards. They were covered with different parts of the seder - whenever a child realized we were doing that part of the seder, they put a sticker on their board. (Meredith Polsky)
- Gotta love Rabbi Joe Black's Who Led The Slaves Out?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1aO5M-fpXM> (Deborah Fish Gordesky)
- I've put together questions on little slips of papers in a bowl and passed them around the table for comments and discussions. (Is freedom free? What are you trying to break free from in your own life? etc.) If you have questions you think are good to ask at the seder table (for all ages) please post them!
- We chant the entire Maggid in the nusach my grandfather used to use. As an adult, I realize what a powerful tool it has been to get the text of the Haggadah into my head.(Sarah Jacobs)
- We have always encouraged kids to bring their instruments to the seder table. In the weeks before Pesach they would learn the music to play along with our singing. Since we use many old family melodies, it is also a way to deeply imprint those melodies . As they have gotten older they can accompany more and more of the seder. (Sarah Jacobs)
- Use red passover jello mix. Pretend you're Moses and hopefully there are enough kids to designate; some as Egyptians, some as Jews. Give them each a cup and show them that for the Jewish people, water remained - but for the Egyptians, it turned to blood. Make sure there is a tiny bit of jello powder in the "Egyptian" cups ahead of time. (Jonathan Teitelbaum)

- Each year, I prepare a study question for each of the four verses of “Arami Oved Avi,” and we divide up in havruta and discuss them when we get to the Arami Oved Avi section. (Engaging for the adults; usually we have someone bringing the kids to do something else at that point.) [Samples from some previous years are here:](#) (Rob Scheinberg)
- One year our kids introduced the various different parts of the seder in character as the Wise Child, the Wicked Child, and the Simple Child. (Rob Scheinberg)
- Have a medium sized box filled with seder shtick on the table. Say that you just found it and it has some of your family’s stuff in it from when they escaped from Egypt. The presence of the box itself will elicit curiosity and questions. (Ann Goldhirsch)
- For the plague of blood (dam), serve bloody marys to the adults and tomato juice to the kids. (Ann Goldhirsch)
- Turn water into blood with this fun science experiment: <http://chemistry.about.com/od/chemistryhowtoguide/ht/waterwine.htm> (Ann Goldhirsch)
- Create (or buy) props for 10 plagues: darkness, sunglasses; wild beasts, masks; plastic balls or marshmallows for hail. Ask participants to come dressed as a plague. (Gidon Isaacs)
- Select one 1 prop (anything) to pass around and ask how would you use this in coming out of Egypt. Make it different every year. (Gidon Isaacs)
- Take Aramei Oved Avi seriously, and expound on it as we are commanded in the Mishnah. Sometimes, I start by singing the Hanukah blessings, and everyone knows and joins in . They quickly realize what is going on, and we then discuss why the rabbis might have chosen a Shavuot prayer for Pesach. One year we also reenacted the Bikkurim ceremony, with a child bringing melons leeks and cucumbers which were rejected by the priest, and then coming back with grapes , figs and dates which were accepted. An alternative , for an older crowd would be to read Mishnah Bikkurim 3 which describes the bringing of the first fruits in festive detail. (Alan Divack)

Rochatza

- As mentioned under pre-seder, we start in the living room. When we are ready to go for dinner, before Motzi, we set up several washing stations to speed things up so that people wash on their way in. Much easier than trying to do it at the table. Also, we enforce a strict no-talking rule, which is something which is not necessarily familiar to most of our guests. We discuss it before, and talk about the importance of washing in the evolution of pharasaic and rabbinic Judaism. (Alan Divack)

Tzafun

- To prevent warfare among children during the afikoman search, the leader places bits of matzah in sealed envelopes, each bearing the name of a child at the seder. Each child looks for her or his afikoman.

- We all have to seek our own completion after all! The kids can help each other out rather than struggle against one another. (Sharon Forman)
- In my house, the kids hide the Afikoman. They then assign an adult to find it. All the guests receive Afikoman gifts. (Sarah Jacobs)

Nirtzah

- Make posters/cards for each number of Echad Mi Yodea. Pass them out at the seder. Each participant has to lift their card at the right point in the song, each time. You know the adults will mess up the most!... (Paula Pepperstone)
- Animal sounds for Chad Gadya-- all together, or each person gets an animal (Ken Richmond)
- We grew up on the WWII era JWB Haggadah. That edition ends with the national anthem and Hatikva. We end seder with the singing of every national anthem known by the people sitting around the table.(Sarah Jacobs)
- My father Elliot (Eliyahu ben Moshe) turned 80 last year, so we did a special tribute to him before welcoming the prophet Elijah. Children and grandchildren told their favorite and most embarrassing stories. I realize this may have limited applicability in other families. (Alan Divack)

- ["Spiritual Biography of Eliyahu haNavi"](#) (originally a Shabbat haGadol Derashah - discusses inter alia the role of Eliyahu at Shfokh Chamatkha) essay and source sheet
- [Reflections of Shfokh Chmatkha](#) from a feminist perspective, talking about the use of anger

["Joseph the Righteous"](#) (discusses why the slavery in Egypt may have been morally necessary, and why Yosef's bones were the last to leave Egypt)

["More than just the Afikomen..."](#) Blog post discussing why creativity is important to the seder, with resource links on the bottom.

Questions for reflection and conversation starting

Before or after the Four Questions: What is different about you this year compared to last year?

Before or after the quote "Next Year in Jerusalem":

Where do you want to be next year?

What do you want to accomplish in the next year?

Movement opportunity for after the Four Questions

Pick up some matzah, the seder plate, your own plate and march around the table or in a space near it, singing a song. We use “*Avadim Ha-yinu*” (We were once slaves. . .) but “If I Had a Hammer” could work too. This is a reenactment of the Exodus and the wandering in the desert.

Group Storytelling

At Passover we are directed to see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. Bibliodrama, the reenactment of Bible stories, is a very effective technique for helping seder participants of all ages to follow this directive. It also helps to enliven your seder; it’s thought provoking and fun!

There are many ways to go about bibliodrama, one suggestion is to build a character by going around the table and asking each person to answer a question about a former slave leaving Egypt. Below you will find a set of questions that you can use to help in the creation of your own seder bibliodrama.

- What was your job in Egypt?
- Are you excited to leave Egypt – why or why not?
- Are you going to miss your home – why or why not?
- What will you miss most about Egypt, what will you miss least, and why? Wh
- Are you scared about the future?
- Do you believe that you will actually leave Egypt and make it to freedom?
- If you could say one thing to Moses what would it be?
- What special things are you bringing with you out of Egypt?
- What does it feel like to see the Sea of Reeds in front of you?
- What does the sea look like when it is parted?
- What kind of smells do you smell as you walk through the parted sea?