



PARK AVENUE SYNAGOGUE

TIPS FOR AN INTERACTIVE SEDER

Children are essential to the Passover seder. The Mishnah says that the purpose of the seder is to tell our children what God did for us when God took us out of Egypt. (*Masechet Pesachim* 10:5) To do that effectively, both adults and children must be engaged. These suggestions will help you make your seder more dynamic for everyone.

BEFORE THE SEDER

Use a new Haggadah

Bring diversity to the seder table by using Haggadot with new takes on the traditional texts. You don't have to buy enough of each Haggadah to go around. Buy one, pick a page or two that you will do from that Haggadah, and copy that page for everyone. *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices* by Michael Zion & Noam Zion (2007) has alternative readings and creative illustrations that can set off a stimulating discussion. *The Promise of the Land: A Passover Haggadah* by Ellen Bernstein (2020) weaves ecological consciousness into the Seder. *The Passover Haggadah: An Ancient Story for Modern Times* by Alana Newhouse (2020) includes a full transliteration as well as contemporary questions, illustrations and meditations.

Make your guests stakeholders

Before the seder, assign guests a part of the Haggadah and ask them to bring something to share about it and what it makes them think about. They can bring something they have written or drawn themselves, a poem, a passage from a book, a song, a picture, or a piece of art, etc.

Prepare the table and seating

■ **Diorama of the Passover Story:** Invite younger children to set up a tableau or diorama of part of the Passover story using Legos, dolls, or toys. They might depict Moses and Aaron speaking to Pharaoh, a plague, the splitting of the Red Sea, etc.

■ **Place cards:** Have your children create place cards. Cards can be illustrated with scenes from the Passover story, drawings of ritual objects or foods, or flowers. (Another name for Passover is "the spring holiday.")

■ **Seating:** Use pillows to make reclining at the seder comfortable! Decorate pillowcases in advance with seder scenes or spring motifs.

AT THE SEDER

Encourage Questions!

There is a custom going back to Talmudic times to give children nuts and sweets at the start of the seder to encourage them to stay involved and to ask questions. Since it's unusual for them to be given treats before dinner, children will ask why, and you just keep going from there.

Here's what the Talmud teaches (Tractate Pesachim 108b-109a):

ת"ר הכל חייבין בארבעה כוסות הללו אחד אנשים ואחד נשים ואחד תינוקות א"ר יהודה וכי מה תועלת יש לתינוקות בין אלא מחלקין להן קליות ואגוזין בערב פסח כדי שלא ישנו וישאלו אמרו עליו על רבי עקיבא שהיה מחלק קליות ואגוזין לתינוקות בערב פסח כדי שלא ישנו וישאלו.

The Sages taught: All are obligated in these four cups, including men, women, and children. Rabbi Yehuda said: What benefit do children receive from wine? They do not enjoy it. *Rather, one distributes to them roasted grains and nuts on Passover eve, so that they will not sleep and also so they will ask the four questions at night.* They said about Rabbi Akiva that he would distribute roasted grains and nuts to children on Passover eve, so that they would not sleep and so they would ask questions.

What would be a treat for your children early in the seder? Serve it, and encourage all questions!

Games

Games can enliven the seder for both adults and children. Choose a game that feels most appropriate for the ages of your participants.

■ The Number Game

Many of us sing the number song "Who Knows One?" at the end of the seder. But there are a lot more numbers in the Haggadah! Challenge the people at the seder to find all the different numbers in the Haggadah and what they represent. At the beginning of the seder, tell the children that we are trying to find all the numbers we can. Then, try to determine what all the numbers represent: 1 is God, 2 is Moshe and Aaron. As we work our way through the seder, can we find numbers 1 to 10? 1 to 20? 1 to 100? More than 100?

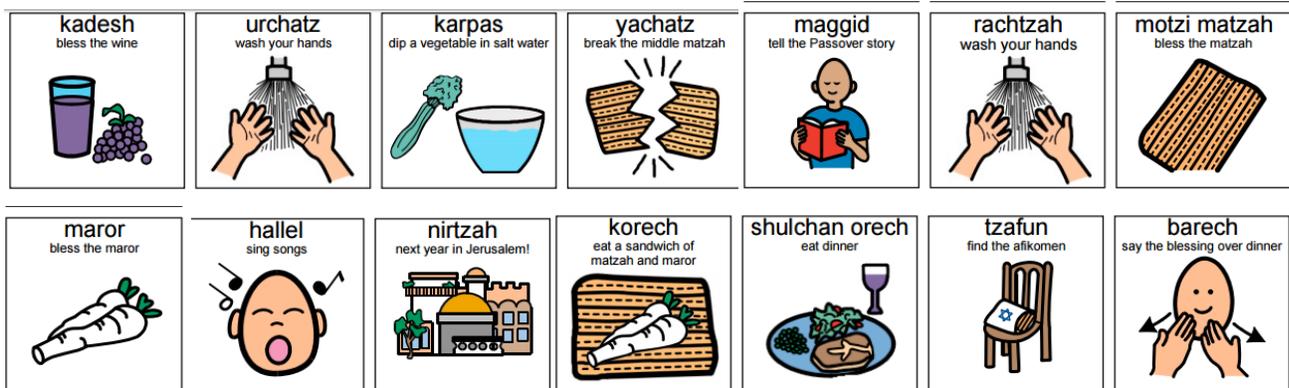
■ Cross the sea!

Using two pieces of blue fabric (sheets, towels, even crepe paper), simulate the splitting of the sea, and have seder participants walk through!

■ Seder Bingo

You can download and print Passover bingo boards from the [Chabad website](#). You'll need bingo chips or buttons or stickers for participants to cover the pictures. (Or use chocolate chips, and at the end of the game, players can eat them.) As you read through the Haggadah, have seder participants cover the pictures as the concepts or words come up. As each person completes a line or a board, recognize them as a winner, perhaps by singing out "Hooray for [person's name]! S/he's a winner!"

Ideas Related to Specific Steps of the Seder



(Images copyright Gateways jgateways.com)



Creative Pesach Story Telling

Before the Maggid section, pass out random objects to the participants. Challenge them that as the group is reading the Haggadah, they should be on the alert for something to which they can relate their object. When something occurs, they should ask for the floor and have their say (briefly).



10 plagues: Use props to illustrate the Ten Plagues. You can buy "plagues bags," but you can also make your own: water colored with red food coloring, toy frogs, plastic insects and animals, wild beast stuffed toys, ping pong ball "hail," sunglasses or sleep masks for darkness, band-aids for boils, etc. Use your imagination!)



Seder plate symbols When you talk about the foods on the seder plate, ask guests to imagine what other foods could also represent slavery and freedom, in essence creating their own "personalized" seder plate. For example:

- Licorice shoelaces could represent the whips of the Egyptians.
- Ice cream could represent freedom because you have to be free to eat ice cream. If you are working on someone else's schedule, the ice cream will melt.



Before the Four Questions

One of the mitzvot of the seder is to feel as if we ourselves were slaves in Egypt and were freed by God. The story should feel relevant and meaningful.

Empower children to make the story of the Exodus their own by asking them to prepare a current and meaningful issue to present and discuss at the seder. Think immigration, child labor . . .-) Telling a modern story that shares elements with the traditional story will enable them to see more deeply into both.



There is an Iraqi custom to have the children put on a skit at the beginning of the Maggid section of the seder, right before the Four Questions. The children dress up as Israelites wandering in the desert. This can be as simple as scarves on their heads and satchels on their backs, or any other embellishments you may want to add.

As the children slowly walk into the room, an adult asks them questions and they respond. Immediately following the final question, the children start singing the Four Questions.

The traditional text of the skit reads:

Where are you coming from?	מאין באתם?
<i>Egypt.</i>	ממצרים.
And where are you going?	לאן אתם הולכים.
<i>Jerusalem.</i>	לירושלים.
Do you have food for the journey?	מה הצידה שלכם?

However, you can make up your own script. Here is a sample based on the skit in *A Different Night: A Family Participation Haggadah* by Noam Zion and David Dishon.

[Children knock on the door.]

Adults: Who's there?

Children: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and the Children of Israel.

Adults: Come in. Tell us about your journey!

Children: We have just arrived from Egypt where we were slaves to Pharaoh. He made us work so hard. *[Feel free to improvise].*

Adults: How did you escape?

Children: God sent Moshe and Aaron to tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" When Pharaoh refused, God sent ten plagues. Finally, Pharaoh was scared and let us go.

Adults: Why are you dressed like that?

Children: We escaped in the middle of the night and had no time to pack or let our bread rise! It turned into matzah as we carried it on our backs and it baked in the sun.

Adults: How did you feel when all this happened?

Children: *[improvise]*

Adults: Where are you going now?

Children: Jerusalem.

Adults: Any questions for us?

Children: *Mah nishtanah . . . ?*



American Idol Four Questions

Modernize the Four Questions for older children:

- New tunes. Either individually or in teams have people sing the Four Questions to different tunes.
- Come up with new questions! Are there any other things that make this night different? (Of course there are!)



Family History

After reading *Arami oved avi* (“My father was a wandering Aramean...”)

Just as this segment tells a family history, have participants around the seder table tell their family’s history. Ask:

- Where did your family come from?
- What sort of journey did they take to get to America?
- This is also a great time for guests to share their favorite Passover customs and rituals from childhood. Do you have special memories? Do you remember special tunes? If so, tell us when we get to those parts of the seder, and teach them to us.



Packing for Freedom

After saying *B’khol dor va-dor*, each person is obligated to see themselves leaving Egypt

Put an empty suitcase on the table. Ask your seder participants: If you were leaving Egypt, what would you take with you? Why?



“Chopped!” – Passover edition

After having the Korekh (Hillel sandwich)

Have the children create Hillel sandwiches using any of the ingredients on the table, plus a “secret ingredient.” (This can be anything you want. If you are comfortable, allow the kids to raid your fridge! There is an Indian tradition to make the sandwiches with chicken, so if you want to add some meat, go for it!) Have everyone taste each other’s sandwiches.



Topsy-Turvy Tzafun (Afikoman)

If your usual family custom is for the adults to hide the afikoman and the children to find it, switch it up and have the children hide it for the adults to find. If your usual way to do it is that an adult hides it, have the children hide it instead.



Afikoman Gift Ideas

Marga Hirsch, Director of the PAS Library, offers this suggestion:

“In our family, the kids hide the afikoman. One night the kids get gifts (most often a book) in exchange for returning it. On the other night, the adults offer to make a significant contribution to the *tzedakah* of the kids’ choice in exchange for getting the afikoman back. We pre-select a few different *tzedakot* and print out descriptions for the kids to read and consider, but we are open to their suggestions, too.”



Nirtzah Sing-along

Try singing the songs at the end of the Haggadah to different melodies or in different languages.

- Do a “Who knows one?” rap! See if you can get through it all in one breath.

Or sing songs that are not in the Haggadah. Suggestions:

- Songs of freedom
- Songs about spring
- Songs that express gratitude
- Songs that praise the world that God has created
- Number songs
- Songs about Jerusalem

Don't Miss the Best Parts Because They Are Last!

Singing the songs at the end is one of the most fun parts of a seder. But if your family reads the entire Haggadah and enjoys a leisurely meal, the youngest participants (and some of the older ones) may have been put to bed (or fallen asleep on the sofa) before the end. Even though *seder* means “order,” it’s OK to skip ahead to favorite songs before the seder is over. Sing between courses at dinner. Imagine starting the seder singing “Had Gadya” and then singing it again at the end.