

Experiencing the Pesach Seder

The Pesach Seder is one of the greatest opportunities we have for experiential education. The Seder is interactive, includes lots of symbolism, uses different senses, encourages the asking of questions and involves a lot of singing.

Each year our family challenges itself to come up with something fun and creative to do differently at the Seder. We've created our own box of *makot*, played Seder bingo, and have enjoyed chocolate-shaped frogs for dessert.

As busy as the Pesach prep is, making time to ensure that there are fun and interactive activities at your Seder, will enhance your family's Seder experience. Below are a few ideas that you and your family may enjoy doing to make things even more exciting at your Pesach Seder!

Pesach: Say What?

This is a game of word association.

Each person takes a few cards and has to get everyone else at the Seder to guess the word at the top of their card without using the words below the line.

If they use any of the words below the line they have to give up the card to the player on their left.

A set of cards is available at yutorah.org/togo/pesach. Remember to print and cut out the cards before Pesach begins. If you didn't cut out the cards, you can improvise using the page at the end of this article.



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Who's Who at the Seder

Throughout the Haggadah we are introduced to a number of different personalities: Rabbis, the people involved in the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, the Four Sons.

Take some time before Pesach to assign family members to do research on each of these personalities, and then to represent these figures when their name is mentioned in the Haggadah.

When you get up to the part in the Seder where your character appears, stand up and do your best to represent them; consider dressing up, sharing their biographical history, or what you imagine it would be, and what you think they would bring if they were a guest at your Seder table.

Thanksgiving Dinner at the Pesach Seder

Most of Hallel is said after *Shulchan Orech* is done and the afikoman is eaten. By that time, many kids, and likely many adults, are already on the tired side, and some have even fallen asleep. Take the opportunity during *Shulchan Orech*, for everyone to go around and share what they are thankful for over Pesach.

Begin the prompt by reminding

everyone that we were once slaves in Mitzrayim, and now we have all the freedoms and rights we could want. Share with everyone what you are thankful for as a Jewish person this Pesach.

“This Pesach, I am thankful for _____.”

DIY Symbolism at the Seder

by Aaron Steinberg

This is an instruction guide for an activity that places a stuffed elephant on the Seder table, and asks every participant to think of their own explanation as to why a symbolic elephant might belong at the Seder. [Obviously the elephant can be replaced by any item you want, but you will need to have some reason prepared as to why you chose it.]

Stage One — Instructions for Facilitator

1. Please place a toy/stuffed elephant on the Seder table — preferably toward the beginning of the Seder.
2. Don't intentionally draw attention to the elephant — wait for someone to ask.
3. If someone asks about it at a good time, great. If they ask about the elephant too early, tell them you'll

explain a little later.

4. When you're ready to explain the elephant, go to stage two.

Stage Two — Explanation of the Elephant's Role at the Seder

When you're ready to explain the game, read the following:

The Passover Seder is filled with symbols and symbolism. We have a ritual washing of the hands, there is a Seder plate filled with symbolic items, and maybe even Savta will symbolically (and literally) whip us with scallions. The symbols are present to remind us of themes related to the Passover holiday, and to serve as a stimulus for discussion and reflection.

But who said the symbols are limited to those prescribed in the Hagaddah? Many families have their own traditions of symbols that they bring out at the Seder each year to bring the Seder to life. For example, there are those who decorate their table to look like the Splitting of the Sea, others who wear masks representing the Ten Plagues. Whatever the symbol is, it's there to promote conversation, and bring more meaning to the Seder.

The literal "elephant in the room" is an example of a new symbol on the Seder table. I have one explanation for the presence of an elephant on the Seder Table, but first we should all take some guesses as to what the elephant symbolizes. Later on, I'll share my explanation. So, who has any ideas for what an elephant might symbolize?

Stage Three — An Elephant Explanation

Why did I put an elephant on the table? To symbolize memory. We have all heard about elephants having a good memory, but I personally never knew a serious answer (it's not because they keep things in their trunk...). Apparently

they have very large brains, and elephant matriarchs are able to remember where their watering holes are over very large areas. But the elephant is just the symbol, right? The real point is about memory. On Passover, we are fulfilling the Biblical commandment to remember what God did for us when he took us out of Egypt. We are required every day, and particularly on Passover, to remember something that happened thousands of years ago to our ancestors. But why do we need a Seder to remember this story? On Purim, we remember the story by reading Megillat Esther. Couldn't we do the same on Passover by just going to synagogue and reading relevant portions from the Torah? What's with the whole production? Some psychiatrists say that research into memory tells us that when we remember things, we re-encode them in our brains. It's not simply an act of recall; we have the potential to rewrite the memory in our heads. The more involved and elaborate the recollection, the more impactful the re-encoding can be. By talking about and acting out the Seder, in some small way we are actually making ourselves part of the story. So when you look at this little cute elephant on the table, think about how your memory and connection with Passover and Jewish heritage and values can be affected by participation in the Seder. Think about ways to internalize the lessons of tonight.

Stage Four — If everything went well, encourage each participant to think of (or bring) their own symbolic item they think belongs on the table. Each person will have a chance to argue for the relevance of their symbol, and we can even vote on which item is the best Passover symbol. Who knows? Maybe that symbol will win a spot on the table for the next Seder (tomorrow or next year).

Say What? Cards

SEDER PLATE

Round

Food

Symbolic

HAGGADAH

Book

Story

Order

PESACH

Holiday

Leaving Egypt

Bnei Yisroel

MATZAH

Crunchy

Round

Square

AFIKOMAN

Hide
Dessert
Present

MAH NISHTANAH

Hagaddah
Four
Questions

FOUR SONS

Boys
Evil
Doesn't know how to ask

KIDDUSH

Wine
Grape Juice
4 Cups

BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

Hide
Search
Candle

BIUR CHAMETZ

Bread
Burn
Morning

CHAMETZ

Bread
Rise
Prohibited

MARROR

Bitter
Horseradish
Romaine Lettuce

CHOL HAMOED

Great Adventure
Trips
Bagged lunch

MACAROONS

Coconut
Sweet
Cookie

CHAD GADYA

Goat
Song
Malach Hamavet

DAYEINU

Song
Sufficient
Hashem

URCHATZ

Water
Hands
No Bracha

KARPAS

Green
Vegetable
Ground

YACHATZ

Matzah
Break
Afikoman

MAGGID

Sing
Story
Leaving Egypt

MAKOT

Ten
Blood
Frogs

PESACH

Holiday
Chametz
Seder

SEDER NIGHT

Matzah
Order
Singing

SHULCHAN OREICH

Food
Hungry
Dinner

ELIYAHU HANAVI

Cup of Wine
Door
Mashiach

YERUSHALAYIM

Kotel
Next Year
Israel

HALLEL

Singing
Fourth Cup
Praise

PAROAH

Egypt
Slavery
Heart