Ramah at your *Seder* Table

A collection of activities and discussions from some of your favorite Camp Ramah in the Poconos educators



2015/5775

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A Note from the Director

Rabbi Joel Seltzer

Sometimes I dream of what *Pesach* at camp could look like…600 people in the *Chadar Ochel*, enjoying a meal, a deep-conversation, and of course, standing *edah* by *edah* as we run through the verses of *Chad Gadya*.

But, since your *Seder* table only has two leaves in it, we have decided to do the next best thing – which is to bring the Ramah experience to you!

We are thrilled to present our second annual 'Ramah at your *Seder* Table'; a collection of teachings, games, and activities for your family to enjoy while we participate in the re-telling of our national narrative of freedom.

Next Year in Jerusalem, or at Camp Ramah!

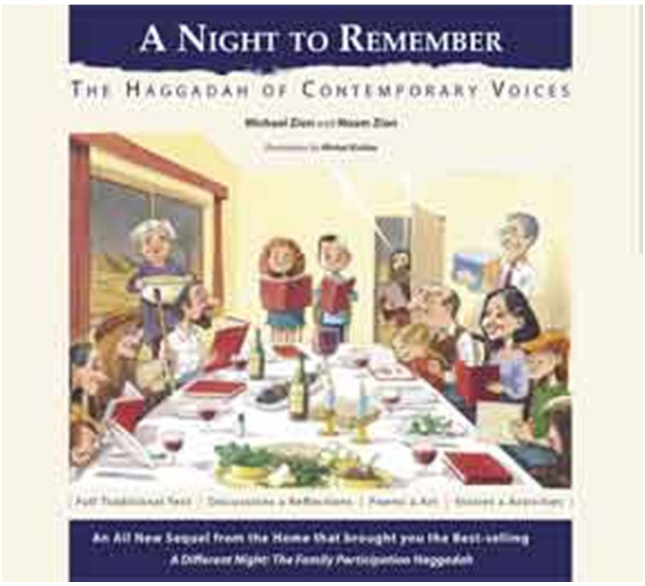
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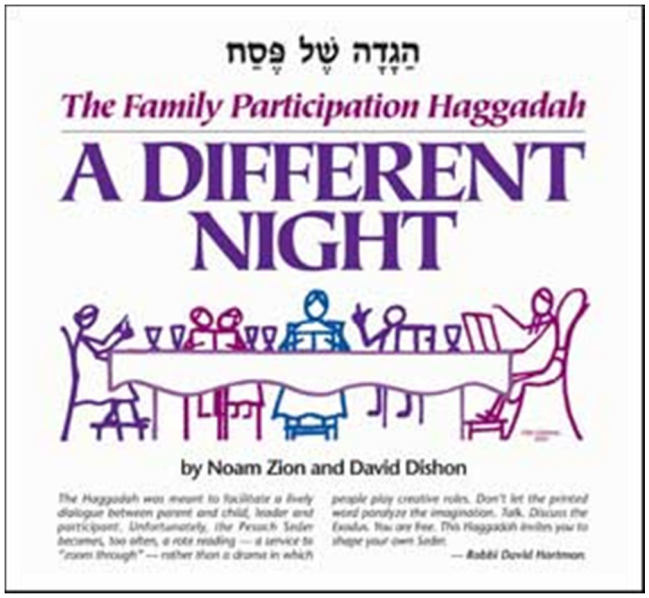
Rabbi Joel

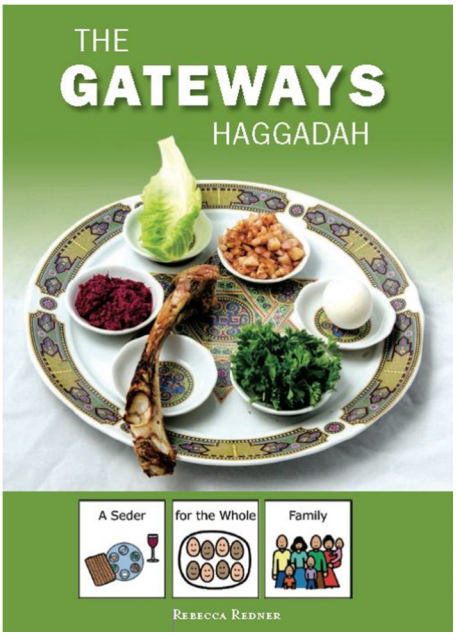
Haggadah Options for your Family

The following *Haggadot* are all good options for *Seder*s for the whole family:









Artist's *Haggadah*

Rabbi Joel Seltzer

So there I was, last spring, just strolling along aimlessly through the streets of the old city of Jaffa, when I discovered an art store. In the window was a *Haggadah* open to this page. The store, Asufa on Margoza St., is an art co-op; and for two years they have worked together with local Israeli artists to create a modern, artistic *Haggadah* complete with all the trappings of the original text. Each page a familiar text; each page a different artist's imagining of that text.

Here is one that caught my eye:



The text here begins:

"In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as though they themselves left Egypt…"

The Hasidic Rabbi, Rabbi Yitzkhak Meir of Gur, reads this famous line a little bit differently, proving the point that the placement of a period makes all the difference.

He reads it as:

"In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves."

What the Gerrer Rebbe is teaching us is that the experience of *Pesach* and the theme of liberation is not solely a national message; rather it can also be seen as a deeply personal experience.

- *What are the things to which I feel enslaved?*
- *Am I pleased with my priorities?*
- *Do I spend enough time around the table with family and friends?*
- *How much 'chametz' is there in my life?*

And – of course – how do I break the negative cycles in my life and thereby lead myself towards the path of *Ge'ulah*, of redemption?



Seder Balagan (Mixed Up *Seder*)

Dr. Andrea Lieber, *Rosh Hinuch*

Seder means "order." For generations, we Jews have told our story using prompts and props in a specific order to remind us of the experience of liberation. I don't know about you, but in our family, we tend to have the same roles year in and out. We make the same dishes, invite the same people, and read the same parts of the *Haggadah*. Maintaining this order is important—it's tradition! It connects us to generations of Jews past and present, all over the world, who perform these same rituals on *Seder* night.

But, Passover is also about liberation—freeing ourselves from habits and routines which can become so rigid that they oppress us and weigh us down. Sometimes, it's only when we break our routines that we truly experience freedom and learn something new about the world or about ourselves. This is one of the great lessons our children learn at Ramah every summer.

Balagan is a Hebrew word that means "chaos" or "pandemonium." It's the opposite of *Seder*! A few Fridays each summer, we plan a *Boker Balagan (Mixed up Morning)*—a morning of "organized chaos" where we ditch the regular schedule and plan activities that are completely different from what we normally do. It's a fun way to close out the week and set the tone for Shabbat.

Here are a few ideas for creating a little bit of *Balagan* at your table this year, while preserving the traditional order of the *Seder*:



- Change up your seating—let the youngest child sit at the head of the table!
- Ask someone new to lead your *Seder*, try a different *Haggadah*, or change the way you assign readings.
- Find something other than parsley to dip for *Karpas*.
- Try a new recipe.
- Eat dessert first!
- With each cup of wine, challenge your guests to think of a popular song that matches up with the themes of the *Seder* (spring, renewal, freedom, letting go). Then, sing it!
- Just as an orange or Miriam's cup have been new additions to *Seders* in recent years, add a new object to your *Seder* plate or to your table—an item that represents an issue you really care about, and want to commit to this year.
- Invite guests to eat part of the meal UNDER the table! At a *Seder* we attend each year, it is customary for the first born to eat a hardboiled egg under the table.

Once you start to mix things up at your *Seder*, you might see something new in the Four Questions:

What differentiates this night from all [other] nights?

- On all [other] nights we eat *chametz* and *matzah*; this night, only *matzah*?
- On all [other] nights we eat other vegetables; tonight *maror*.

- On all [other] nights, we don't dip [our food], even one time; tonight [we dip it] twice.
- On [all] other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining; tonight we all recline.

The traditional Four Questions are not really questions at all—This section of the *Haggadah* is really just one question, followed by four responses that articulate specific ways in which the Passover meal is different from a regular meal. While the traditional text of the *Haggadah* goes on to explain why we do things differently on this night, consider spending some time discussing what truly differentiates *Seder* night from all other nights in your family!

What does it mean to be different, anyway?

Seder Table Games

Would You Rather: *Pesach* Edition

Would you rather…

…Be Moshe or Aaron; Aaron or Miriam; Pharaoh or Moshe?
…Eat the whole dish of horseradish, or the whole dish of gefilte fish?
…Be the "wicked child" or the "wise child"?

Seder Play



You are *Rosh Drama* for the night! Get everyone up from the table and improvise a 10-minute play to act out the Passover story…in HEBREW! Well, okay, use as many Hebrew words as you can!

Pesach Mafia

Play a game of "Mafia" around the *Seder* table, but instead of the usual roles, use characters from the Passover story: Moshe, Miriam, Pharaoh, Egyptians, Israelites, Angel of Death, Eliyahu haNavi.

Ramafikomen 2.0

After the *Afikomen* has been found and redeemed, challenge your guests to a Scavenger Hunt...ask everyone to hunt around the house for items/objects that relate to the themes of the *Seder* (freedom, renewal, family) or camp. Give everyone 5 minutes to find an object, then come back to the table to report on their item and its connections to the values that are meaningful to them.

The Homemade *Seder*

Staci Boiskin



As a mother of three, I have collected many wonderful homemade *Seder* plates, plastic *kiddush* cups decorated with stickers, *matzah* covers made from handkerchiefs and sharpies, *afikomen* bags made from felt and glitter glue, cotton-stuffed *Seder* pillows, and creative booklets describing the plagues. I have collected Passover poems and songs my children wrote, even rap songs. They are all stored in a plastic container, and brought out once a year to touch, look at, play with, and remember. I have many beautiful Judaica pieces that I could use to adorn my *Seder* table with, but the homemade *Seder* plates are my favorite decorations. They bring back memories of when my children were younger.

I recommend saving all your children's treasures and storing them carefully in containers so that they can be preserved and cherished for many years. I prefer the *Seder* plate that my son made at a local pottery studio to the fancy Lenox one I have.

This year, my family is visiting my oldest daughter who is spending a semester studying in Israel with TRY. We will create new memories there, as we sit in Jerusalem at our *Seder* table. And, I will be packing our home made *Seder* booklets in my suitcase, and maybe even a rap song or two.

Pesach Bingo

Sharon Bromberg

This takes into account the idea that not everyone is engaged in the *Haggadah* all of the time, yet we want them to pay attention, and not get lost. It also takes into account every family's own *meshugas*. Play *Pesach* Bingo!

Before hand with your family [with your family is an ideal way to prepare their minds for the holiday, or you can do this by yourself at 3 a.m], brainstorm words or phrases that will/should come up during your *Seder*. This means words such as: “freedom”, “Pharaoh”, “*maror”*, “slavery”, “with an outstretched arm”. But then there are the personalized ones. Does someone always ask "When do we eat?" Mention global warming? Talk about "the old neighborhood"? Incorporate those, too!

When you have at least 25, go online to **http://print-bingo.com** to generate bingo boards.

Rules:
Have buttons, chocolate chips or other markers out to mark the squares.
Explain that as a word/phrase is read, everyone playing may mark that word. If a word/phrase is said, everyone else (beside the person who said it), may mark the word. [We don't need people asking when dinner is just to get Bingo!]

Have some goofy prizes available for bingo winners!

Seder Discussion Questions

Rabbi Joshua Z. Gruenberg

I. *Kadesh* (Sanctification of the Day)

- Why do we sanctify a holiday by saying a blessing over the wine?
- Why do we drink four cups of wine?

II. *Urchatz*

- Why do we wash hands before a small tasting of vegetables and why do we do so without a blessing?
- We wash to rid ourselves of spiritual un-cleanliness which can also be caused by our arrogance in the way we speak. What impurities might we be ridding ourselves of at this point in the Passover *Seder*?

III. *Karpas* (An Ode to Springtime)

- We dip more than usual on Passover to illicit questions.
- What are we commemorating in dipping the vegetable?
- What does the saltwater represent?

IV. *Yachatz* (Breaking of *Afikomen*)

- *Yachatz* means breaking. What is broken in the holiday of Passover? Later we will do the part of the *Seder Tzafun* where we eat the *Afikomen*. *Tzafun* means hidden. What is hidden in the holiday of Passover?

V. Maggid (The Telling of the Story)

- The central focus of Passover is to tell the story. It says in Exodus 13:8, *"You shall tell your child on that day."* The questions and stories we tell change every year as our lives and worlds change. What questions could we ask new this year that have never been asked?
- The Ten Plagues- Why were the ten plagues necessary? Why did all of the Egyptians need to suffer? What are the modern plagues that we face every day?

V. Post Feast

- *Afikoman*-Why is this necessary for the *Seder* to continue? Do we really need dessert and would that dessert actually be *matzah*?
- Elijah the prophet- When filling the cup of Elijah ask each person for a hope in the new year. In other words "When we gather together next year…"
- *Sfoch Chamatcha*- Does this piece asking God to pour out divine wrath on our enemies have a place in the modern *Seder*? How can we say it and not feel like we are violent?

Seder Jeopardy

Rabbi Joshua Z. Gruenberg

Seder

200- The number of cups of wine we drink
400- Three different foods we eat at *Seder*
600- Three of the four sons
800- Greek name of the dessert part of the *Seder*
1000- Part of Shabbat and Holiday services also said during *Seder*

History

200- Name of country and ruler from which Jewish people left
400- Woman who raised Moses in Egyptian palace
600- Structures in country Jewish people left that they help build that still stand today
800- Names of the two Jewish leaders who lead people out
1000- Name 3 Jewish holidays that have to do with people in desert

Seder Food

200- Cardboard like bread we eat on Passover
400- Hebrew name for the bitter herbs
600- Hebrew name for the mortar like substance we eat made of wine etc.
800- Hebrew name of green vegetable we eat for the spring
1000- Name of Hillel sandwich eaten at *Seder* (*hint it begins with a K*)

Passover Food

200- Main ingredient we cannot eat
400- Fluffy and white *(added to chicken soup)*
600- Kind of fish we eat that is combo of ground up fish
800- Cooked combination of prunes carrots and sweet potatoes
1000- Combination of scrambled eggs and *matzah* pieces

Miscellaneous Facts

200- Number of Passover *Seder*s in US
400- Reason for the name Passover
600- Number of Passover *Seder*s in Israel
800- Name of very strictly watched *matzah* on Passover
1000- Name one of the songs we sing at the end of the *Seder*

Passover Numbers

200- Days of Passover
400- Name 3 times we use the number four during the *Seder*
600- Number of plagues and name 5
800- Days of Passover in Israel
1000- 3 Jewish holidays that last 8 days

Which Child Are You?

Sara Kreisman

We learn about the four children (traditionally the four sons) each year in the *Haggadah*: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who does not know how to ask. Altering the traditional text a bit, and replacing 'wicked'— which perhaps has too harsh a context—with 'selfish', go around the table and ask everyone at the *Seder* which child they think they are. The children especially might be surprised at how many adults do not consider themselves the wise child despite age and experience!

Food for Thought:

- Why are there 4 children? Should/could there be more or less?
- What's the progression from being one of the four children to another?
- Can you be *more* than one kind of child at a time?

Casting Call!

Sara Kreisman

Discuss (and even make a list) of the most significant people in the Passover story. Then, as a group, cast the ancient story of the Exodus using modern day actors, actresses, entertainers, politicians, etc. For further fun, have members of your *Seder* act out his/her role as the famous celebrity they picked!



The Four Children

Rabbi Micah Peltz

One of the most compelling parts of the Passover *Seder* is the *midrash* of the four children – one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know how to ask. Each child poses a question, and we are left, with the *Haggadah*'s guidance, to respond. What is so wonderful about this section is that, like *Mah Nishtana*, it encourages dialogue, for that's how we learn. This *midrash* recognizes that we all learn differently, and sometimes different people require different responses. In education today this is called differentiated instruction, and it is at the heart of how the rabbis envisioned the Passover *Seder* 2,000 years ago.

We could also see this motif of the four sons as representing different aspects of ourselves. We each hold within us wisdom, wickedness, innocence and ignorance. The *Seder* seeks to address all of these traits, and engage us with its songs, smells, and tastes to see ourselves as if we were the ones who left Egypt. By doing this we rediscover our connection to God, to our history, and to our people.

This provocative *midrash* of the four children has led to many creative artistic renderings over the years. Here are three, with brief explanations and questions, for you to ponder at your *Seder*.



"The Four Children"

The Lovell *Haggadah* **by Rabbi Matt Berkowitz**

Rabbi Berkowitz, who visited TBS a few years ago, represents the four children each with a biblical character. The wise child is Deborah, a judge and prophetess who led the Israelites bravely in the book of Judges. The wicked child is King Ahav, a deceitful King of Israel described in the first book of Kings, who cheated his Jewish subjects and defied God's commandments. The simple child is Lot, Abraham's nephew who chose to settle in Sodom and Gemorrah before its destruction because he thought the land looked more appealing. And finally there is Adam and Eve, who were childlike in their innocence in the Garden of Eden.

Do you think that these biblical characters fit as the four children?

What other biblical characters would you suggest to represent each child?

"The Four Daughters"

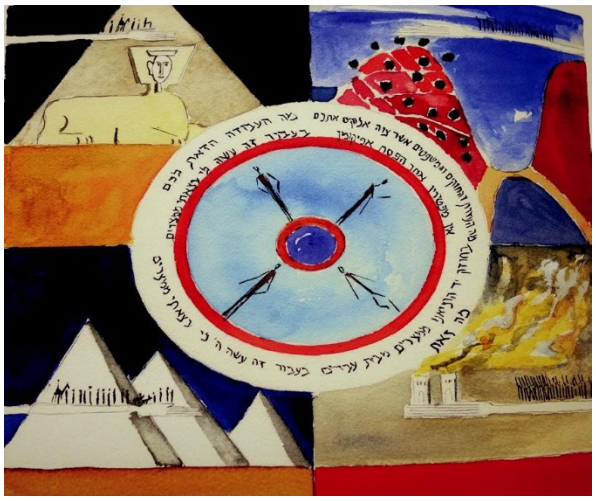
A Different Night *Haggadah* **by Michel Kichka**

Israeli artist Michel Kichka presents a modern take on the four children.

- *Does representing the children as daughters affect your understanding of this section?*
- *How so?*
- *Which trait is represented by which daughter?*
- *Why? To which daughter do you most relate?*



The Four Daughters by Michel Kichka, 2006



"The Four Sons"

The Moriah *Haggadah* **by Avner Moriah**

Israeli artist Avner Moriah presents this beautiful and unique illustration of the four sons. Instead of depicting the different children, he chooses to illustrate the question that each child asks.

- *Which question goes with which image?*
- *How does this visual midrash help you understand the children's questions?*
- *How would you visually depict each question?*
- *What colors would you use, what images?*

Experiencing Egypt Through "Telling" Our Story

Rabbi Aaron Schonbrun

As we gather together at our *Sedarim* during Passover, the very name of our main tool for the evening, the *Haggadah* reminds us that *discussing* the story of our people is our main agenda of the evening. Indeed, the *Mishnah* in *Pesachim* makes a direct connection between "experiencing" Egypt through "telling" our story in a way that is personal and meaningful.

> In every generation a person is obligated to see him or herself as if he or she had gone out of Egypt, as it says: "*And you should tell* your child on that day, "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt (Exodus 13:8)." (*Mishnah Pesachim* 10:5)

Maimonides takes this one step further by explaining that our obligation to "experience" Egypt as something that must be active.

> In every generation a person is obligated to show him or herself as if he or she had personally just gone out from the slavery of Egypt, as it says: "God took us out from there, etc.. (Deuteronomy 6:23), and because of this God commanded us in the Torah: "Remember that you were a slave (Deuteronomy 5:17), that is to say, it should be as if you, yourself were a slave and went out to freedom and were redeemed (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Hametz U'Matzah* 7:6).

And the *Avadim Hayyinu* section of the *Haggadah* points out that this *mitzvah* is incumbent upon each of us regardless of our level of knowledge and understanding about Passover.

> *"...even if all of us were wise, all of us understanding, all elders and versed in knowledge of the Torah,* ***we would still be obligated to discuss*** *(or "tell about") the Exodus from Egypt." And the more one expands on the story of the Exodus from Egypt, the more commendable he/she is.*

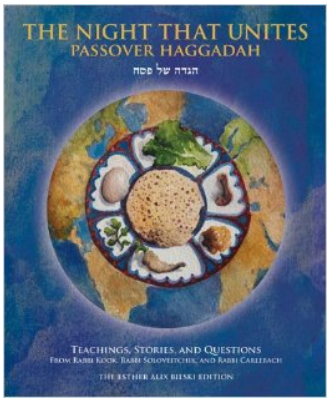
It is interesting that the Exodus from Egypt itself is nowhere in the *Haggadah* as a unit. Of course references to the Exodus are found throughout our text, but where is the actual "telling" and why is it seemingly "missing." One suggestion is that we are not simply telling about the Exodus, but rather telling about what it means to be a part of the Jewish people through the lens of the Exodus- a subtle, but important distinction. With that in mind, I encourage you to consider the following questions:

- *What do you consider to be the most important part of the Exodus story and why?*
- *What is one way in which you personally feel connected to the greater narrative of the Exodus and teachings in the Haggadah?*
- Choose your favorite section of the *Haggadah* and see if you can find a personal connection to the text. *Why is this section your favorite and what relevance does it have in your daily life?*

Happy "Telling" and *Hag Kasher v'Sameach*!

Getting Rid of our Crumbs

Rabbi Aaron Schonbrun



Each year, as Passover begins, we set about the task of spring cleaning. In a physical sense, we are taught to spend time cleaning out our homes, our pantries, and our cars to rid ourselves of any *hametz* that might be found in our midst. But our cleaning is not only to be done on a physical level. Passover is also a time for us to do some spiritual spring cleaning as we celebrate our people's journey from slavery to freedom. This year, I came across a new *Haggadah* that I purchased last year entitled: The Night That Unites: Teachings, Stories and Questions from Rabbi Kook, Rabbi Soloveitchik, and Rabbi Carlebach. In it, I found the following challenge to each of us as we seek to spiritually prepare for the upcoming holiday.

What is the difference between hametz and matzah? The great mystic and kabbalist from Safe, Rabbi Isaac Luria, known as *HaAri HaKadosh* (1534-1572), explains that *hametz* rises, which signifies haughtiness, while *matzah* does not rise, implying humility.

When we look at the two Hebrew words, *hametz* and *matzah*, one notices they contain two of the same letters **mem, מ,** and **tzadi, צ .** The words differ only in that *hametz* contains a **het**, **ח** and *matzah* a **hey**, **ה.**

The difference between the letter **het**, **ח** and the letter **hey**, **ה**, and thereby the difference between the word *hametz* and *matzah*, is but a minuscule space, a tiny gap.

חמצ vs. מצה

This tiny gap, we are taught, is enough to change *matzah*, a life-giving *mitzvah*, into *hametz*, a symbol of negativity and evil**.** Only a fine line separates true humility, which creates closeness to God, from false modesty, which alienates Him.

Reb Shlomo Carlebach expanded on this lesson of contrasting *hametz* and *matzah*. **Reb Shlomo would say that often the smallest things can make the biggest difference** — both for good and bad.



How many marriages are destroyed because of one small thing? The difference between being a good father or a good mother might be just one small thing. In our personal lives, one small change can make a world of difference. **What keeps us from becoming free is sometimes a very small thing**. ***Hametz* is forbidden even in the smallest amounts because sometimes one crumb can destroy your life.** As Passover comes, we're getting rid of all those tiny crumbs. Between redemption and slavery is

something so tiny. Real redemption comes when we walk around with the candle and find this tiny trait that's holding us back from becoming who we really want to be (167).

This Passover, as we gather around our *Seder* Tables with family and friends, I invite you to consider this teaching. **Ask yourselves: What is the "small thing" that is your biggest challenge in life? What is the one small change that you could make in your life that would help bring you from slavery into freedom?** Often we look to make big changes and end up failing because we take on too much. As our season of freedom and redemption comes near, with spring and re-birth in the air-- we are going to finally get *completely* in shape, lose *all* of the weight that we need to lose, get *our entire* financial house in order, get our lives *completely* organized, "fix" *all* of our personality flaws... This Passover, instead of looking to free ourselves by biting off more than we can chew, our rabbis teach us to take a more manageable and meaningful step by encouraging us to find one small thing that we can change, in the hopes of achieving a more lasting sense of inner redemption and freedom. May each of us be up to the challenge.

The *Matzah* Ball

By Rebecca Mison Wolnek



This is a great idea to get a group of different aged children active in the *Seder*. They will attend "The *Matzah* Ball" in character and provide entertainment for the other guests. The theme of your "Ball" depends on how many children (and adventurous adults) you are expecting. Some suggestions: 10 plagues, 4 sons, 4 questions, items on the *Seder* plate, etc…



You can assign roles in advance and have them come in character or provide a dress-up chest and/or pre-made masks on site. When the themed moment of the *Seder* arrives, announce the characters as though they are arriving at a ball. "Here she is, all the way from Moshe's farm... Miss *Karpas*!" Depending on the age of the children, entertainment could include: singing a nursery rhyme (ex. Itsy-bitsy spider for locust), singing a web-sourced parody song (Let Them Go, Crossing the Sea) or creating their own parody song/skit/dance.

Schmaltzing Up Your *Seder*

Rabbi Eric Yanoff

(From the Yanoff/Wiener/Elster/Linder/Essrog/Dorsch/Albert/Feinberg/Cohen Seder – Yes, we're all related….)

"Ramah-Nishtanah" Snapshots: What Small Things are Extraordinary?

The *Seder* is supposed to make Judaism (and in particular the story of the Exodus) come ALIVE, as EXTRAORDINARY.



Often, it's the little things, the SNAPSHOTS (of camp, of any moment or experience) that make the experience EXTRAORDINARY. Changing from bread to *matzah*, eating bitter herbs instead of any vegetable, dipping twice, instead of once, reclining as we eat…

- We know that about camp, too: Dancing outside the *Chadar Ochel* on Friday nights, or before lunch… *Kabbalat Shabbat* by the Lake… Being told to go to bed ("*yashar la-tzrifim*"), and being happy about it… Going crazy for a certain food/song/*petzah*.

What makes THIS moment extraordinary?

Roses and Thorns, Karpas Edition:

"Ha-zor'im b'dimah, b'rinah yikzoru" (Those who plant with tears, will harvest joy – Psalm 126 and opening paragraph of Birkat HaMazon)

- At KARPAS, we are supposed to recall the TEARS of our ancestors. It also counts as one of the moments of dipping ("*shtei f'amim,*" from the *mah nishtanah*). But the blessing, "*borei peri ha-adamah*," also allows us to eat something else we dip: CHOCOLATE-DIPPED STRAWBERRIES – so we contrast the tears and despair of the past, with sweetness now – after the salt-water dipping, we have a chocolate dipping!

- You can also do "roses and thorns" at *DAYYENU*, but with an emphasis on the ROSES: *What are the modern-day miracles that would have never seemed possible before they happened?* Go around the table, letting people share something miraculous and unbelievable – and every few, sing the "*dayyenu*" refrain, tagging on OUR PERSONAL miracles to the historical miracles of *dayyenu.*

Today we are at our *Seder*; in 81 days may we be in another very different place, *bein richsei he-harim*... Today, we are crowded at a too-small table, opening the door and singing "*Eliyahu ha-Navi*"; in 81 days may we be in a circle, arms around one another, after Shabbat, singing "*Eliyahu ha -Navi*"... Today, we are singing *birkat ha-mazon* on folding chairs with our families and drinking four cups of wine/grape juice; in 81 days may we be singing *birkat ha-mazon* with our extended *tzrif/edah* families, banging on tables, ripping our pants on loose bench nails, and stealing extra Kedem grape juice from the family tables in the *Chadar Ochel* for late-night *tzrif* or *edah* toasts/*l'chaims*.

L'KAYITZ HA-BA'AH B'MACHANEH RAMAH! L'SHANAH HA-BA'AH B'YERUSHALAYIM!