

Some Suggestions for Enriching Your Family's Pesah Celebration

Pesah is a holiday that engages all of our senses, as well as our spirits. Each year we re-enact the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom as we clean our homes to rid them of *hametz*, as we prepare the foods and symbols of the *Seder*, and as we gather around the *Seder* table with family and friends to join in our yearly retelling of the story of our people. The sights, smells, sounds, and tastes of Pesah create memories that stay with us throughout our entire lives. Much of what we do at the *Seder* is meant to arouse the interest and curiosity of our children. However, the *Seder* is also meant to be an experience for adults. It is important for children to participate in the rituals of the *Seder*, but it is also important for them to see the adults around the table being similarly involved. Finding a balance between being kid-friendly and being spiritually gratifying on a more adult level presents an exciting challenge. Below are some suggestions for helping to make this experience more lively, creative, and meaningful:

1. Make cleaning and preparing for Pesah a family experience. Give your children small jobs to do around the house, and have them assist with the cooking. Let everyone in your household share in the excitement and anticipation of getting ready for Passover!

2. Make the *Seder* table as elegant as your means allow, replete with a *Seder* plate and all the holiday symbols. For Pesah ritual items, please call Sisterhood Judaica Shop co-chairs Myra Marshall (781/862-3914) or Marcia Greenfield (781/861-3839).

3. Consider including more contemporary ritual objects, such as a *kos Miriam* (Miriam's Cup), which recalls Miriam's gift of bringing water for the Israelites during their journey through the desert. Bring ritual objects from your own family to the table as well, creating a sense of connectedness to previous generations and to your family's history.

4. Order an adequate number of copies of the *Haggadah* in advance. Our Sisterhood Judaica Shop has a number of good *Haggadot* on hand. Alternatively, you can make your own *Haggadah*

for all or parts of the *Seder*. A great resource for supplementing your *Seder* is the book, *Creating Lively Passover Seders*, by David Arnow, PhD, published by Jewish Lights (www.jewishlights.com).

5. *Magid* (the telling of the story) is the highlight of the *Seder*. It is also its longest section, full of *midrashim* that illuminate the various events of the Exodus. To stave off cries of “When do we eat?” Consider making *karpas* (the green vegetable) slightly more substantial than a sprig of parsley. Serve salads, or make veggies available for snacking throughout the telling of the story. Perhaps offer younger children a snack late in the afternoon preceding the *Seder* so that they are not distracted by hunger later on.

6. Assign reading parts in advance to those who will be in attendance at the *Seder*, giving your guests time to become comfortable with texts. Encourage your “readers” to share their thoughts about the meaning and application of these words. Teach the *Mah Nishtanah* to children, so that they can participate actively from the very beginning of the evening.

7. Use props. The *Seder* is meant to be a re-enactment of the Exodus from Egypt. In fact, the *Haggadah* tells us that “In every generation each individual should feel as though he or she had gone out of Egypt.” Bring a “plague bag” to the *Seder* table to add a little fun to this experience. Create a skit for the children to perform for the Four Children. Tailor these additions to suit your family’s needs and interests.

8. The word “*Afikoman*” is now thought to mean “dessert” or “after dinner entertainment,” so make the *Afikoman* search into a moment of entertainment and revelry. Some interesting symbolic warning signs can be posted, or vague clues with Jewish content planted along the way as the children complete their search. A suitable prize, either a Jewish book or ceremonial object, should be wrapped for the finder of the *Afikoman*. The giving of money on *Yom Tov* is not permitted.

9. The end portions of the *Haggadah* are filled with powerful moments and celebratory singing. Make room in your *Seder* to finish the *Haggadah* and not end the evening with the meal. Children are likely to know many of these closing songs, providing a wonderful opportunity to keep them involved the whole night long. **To see some of these ideas put into practice and to get some new ones, please join us on Sunday, April 6 at 9:45 am for a special Family Seder Workshop!**

The *Seder* is a time for being together with family and friends, for reinvigorating our connection to the Jewish tradition, and for celebrating the story of freedom that is both the point of origin of our people and our legacy. Enjoy!