

**Preparing for the 2015 Seder  
Interesting Ideas...New Ideas...Fun Ideas...  
For the kid in you and for the adults too!**

*The universe is made up of stories, not of atoms. - Muriel Rukeyser*

One of the classic lines in the Haggadah declares that even if a person is wise and learned and even if a person knows the Passover story inside out, it is still important to tell and retell the story of our slavery and freedom.

I take that notion seriously insofar as I try my best each year to discover something "new" in the very "old" story told by the Haggadah. As Passover approaches, I ask myself what distinguishes this year from other years and that's where my creative efforts focus.

**So, then, what does distinguish this year - 2015?**

What lends itself to conversation, give-and-take, and hopefully some humor? And that is another focus for me: If we can't laugh at our Seder, we haven't done it right. There has to be some humor.

**But first to the events that might shape Seder 2015.**

Given the recent Israeli election and the unknowns that lie ahead as Prime Minister Netanyahu tries to form a new government, I think the Jewish story that requires attention this Spring when Jews get together is ISRAEL.

I know the Seder isn't a classroom. The Seder also isn't a history class.

Nevertheless, I think it fair to say that our brothers and sisters in Israel are troubled as they anticipate Passover. There is much concern over the paths to be followed when it comes to the Palestinians, peace, and domestic matters. No one ever said building a country is an easy task.

So...how about this?

[Scroll down to the bottom of this message and you'll find two readings in blue.](#) They aren't political. They are prayers. Use them. You and I are bound to Israel!!! More Jews live there than any other place on earth. That means Israel needs to be part of a 2015 Seder.

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Onward...

If you have young children, follow this link for a young family Seder.

<http://www.sinai-temple.org/passover/family.php>

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**Sinai Lending Library of Haggadahs**

We've got over 100 copies of the Reform movement's modern Passover Haggadah waiting for YOU to borrow and use. PLUS we have a family Haggadah and copies of two other new Haggadahs. Please use them. Borrow 5, 10, 15 or as many as you need for your Seder.

Visit the Temple office Monday to Friday OR the Temple Library next Sunday, March 29.

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And, of course, we've got the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Selma march and so much related to civil rights.

Check out the [reading in red](#) at the bottom of this message. Follow this link too.

[http://bendthearc.nationbuilder.com/passover50yearsafterselma?utm\\_campaign=passover2015&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=bendthearc](http://bendthearc.nationbuilder.com/passover50yearsafterselma?utm_campaign=passover2015&utm_medium=email&utm_source=bendthearc)

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Speaking of 50, remember that it's the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Sound of Music. Listen to the music.

Create your own Passover song using one of those great melodies.

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Are you musically challenged?

Not to worry. Just photocopy this simple round and sing it to the tune of Frere Jacques.

*Eat the matza, eat the matza.*

*Sip the wine, sip the wine.*

*Hide the afikomen, hide the afikomen.*

*Drink the wine, drink the wine.*

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Challenged in the kitchen? Hungry? Follow this delicious link to Passover tasting heaven.

<http://view.mail.rj.org/?j=fe9a15787765017c76&m=fe9e15737067077f75&ls=fe2f12747665037d751374&l=fef2117576630d&s=fe5d1d797160037c7514&jb=ffcf14&ju=fe5817787c640679711d&r=0>

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**And while you are at it....  
Some specific ideas for your Seder...**

\*\*Early in the Seder when you get to the karpas/parsley blessing which symbolizes thankfulness for the arrival of spring, look at the children around your table. They represent growth and new ideas. Pause right there, everyone holds hands, and the adults bless the children.

\*\*After the Four Questions, the Haggadah turns to the Four Children. Now turn to the actual children at your table...What is the best or the most interesting or the weirdest or the most important thing they have learned in school lately. (7 year olds can do this; so can those who are 17!) Or ask the kids what is your favorite subject in school and why.

\*\*Again after the Four Questions, invite anyone (maybe especially the kids) to add a fifth question. Offer a prize of some sort to the person with the best out-of-the-box, difficult, challenging, humorous question on Judaism or any topic in the world.

\*\*For fun – telephone someone you love who isn't at your Seder. Plan ahead maybe and invite that person to read part of the Haggadah for you.

\*\*When you get to the Seder plate and you are describing what you see, invite those present to brainstorm about what object they might add this year to make the Seder relevant. (A Red Sox cap hoping the Red Sox will have a better 2015 season? An ice cube hoping winter will end before June?)

\*\*Before or after you sing Dayenu, think about the idea of having enough. Maybe this is a good time to go around the table and invite everyone to comment on one "blessing" they have experienced this year or they are experiencing at the Seder. (For example, I survived illness...My house didn't flood this winter...My adult child got a good job...etc etc.)

\*\*Stop before you open the door for Elijah to visit the Seder. Everyone writes on a card (anonymously) what an imaginary guest might say if he/she entered the house along with Elijah. For example, what would Hillary Clinton or Jeb Bush say if she or he showed up? Your great grandfather? Abraham Lincoln? Billy Crystal? The choice is yours. The leader collects the cards and after you sing Eliahu Hanavi and empty his wine cup, read the answers aloud. (Should be funny and fascinating as well.)

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I guess you get the idea.

Read the Haggadah. Choose wisely so your Seder isn't too long or too rushed. AND add your own creativity. If you do, you'll have a night to remember.

Visit our website to learn more.

<http://www.sinai-temple.org/passover/>

**Hope to see you on the first morning of Passover for our congregational service – Saturday, April 4 at 10:30 a.m. A light lunch follows the service.**

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When in doubt, one can always turn to the words of a wise Jew. In this case, listen to what playwright Arthur Miller has to teach us: "**Jews are very impatient with doing the same thing over and over again. It's gotta be different.**" Have fun as you make your Seder "different."

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## **EXTRA GOODIES - TERRIFIC ADDITIONS FOR YOUR WONDERFUL SEDER**

### **WE PRAY FOR ISRAEL**

We pray for Israel,  
Both the mystic ideal of our ancestors' dreams,  
And the living miracle, here and now,  
Built of heart, muscle, and steel.

May she endure and guard her soul,  
Surviving the relentless, age-old hatreds,  
The cynical concealment of diplomatic deceit,  
And the rumblings that warn of war,

May Israel continue to be the temple that  
magnetizes the loving eyes of Jews in all corners of the world:

The Jew in a land of affluence and relative peace  
Who forgets the glory and pain of his being,  
And the Jew in a land of oppression whose bloodied fist  
Beats in anguish and pride  
Against the cage of his enslavement.

May Israel yet embrace her homeless, her own.  
And bind the ingathered into one people.

May those who yearn for a society built on human concern  
Find the vision of the prophets realized in her.  
May the readiness to defend  
Never diminish her search for peace.

May we always dare to hope  
That in our day the antagonisms will end,  
that all the displaced, Arab and Jew, will be rooted again,  
That within Israel and across her borders  
All God's children will touch hands in peace.

### **A SIMPLE PRAYER –**

What shall I ask You for, God?  
I have everything  
There's nothing I lack.  
I ask only for one thing  
And not for myself alone;  
It's for many mothers, and children, and fathers  
Not just in this land, but in many lands hostile to each other.  
I'd like to ask for Peace.  
Yes, it's Peace I want,  
And You, You won't deny the single wish of a child.  
You created the Land of Peace,  
Where stands the City of Peace,  
Where stood the Temple of Peace,  
But where still there is no Peace...  
What shall I ask you for God? I have everything.  
Peace is what I ask for,  
Only Peace.

Shlomit Grossberg, age 13 Jerusalem

## **FROM DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING**

Dr. King knew all about the journey and said the following...

***We still have a long, long way to go before we reach the promised land of freedom.***

Yes, we have left the dusty soils of Egypt, and we have crossed a Red Sea that had for years been hardened by a long and piercing winter of massive resistance, but before we reach the majestic shores of the promised land, there will still be gigantic mountains of opposition ahead and prodigious hilltops of injustice...

Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort from the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice. Let us be dissatisfied until those who live on the outskirts of hope are brought into the metropolis of daily security.

Let us be dissatisfied until slums are cast into the junk heaps of history, and every family will live in a decent, sanitary home.

Let us be dissatisfied until the dark yesterdays of segregated schools will be transformed into bright tomorrows of quality integrated education.

Let us be dissatisfied until integration is not seen as a problem but as an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.

Let us be dissatisfied until men and women...will be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not on the basis of the color of their skin.

Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when nobody will shout, "White Power!" when nobody will shout, "Black Power!" but everybody will talk about God's power and human power.

***Mi chamocha...Who is like you, o God...awesome in splendor, working wonders.***

## **Back to the Salt Mines: Seder Dipping and the Holocaust**

Here is something that we do at my Seders every year to bring the reality of my mother's Holocaust experience into the Seder in a tangible way and to emphasize the sense that many tyrants have attempted to destroy us, but that God has saved us repeatedly as a people. Here is the story that goes along with that salt:

During the Holocaust one of my mother's seven camps was Beendorf. This was a salt mine that was 1200 feet below ground and was used to build the guidance systems for the V-1 & V-2 rockets shot over at Britain. By the time my mother was working in this camp, she was suffering from malnutrition. Old wounds on her leg from years before, which had long since scarred over, suddenly reopened due to vitamin deficiency. Walking through the mine, the kicked up salt dust would get into the wounds and sting terribly. Yet, the salt also acted as a disinfectant, keeping the wounds from getting infected.

In approximately 1987, before the East Germans flooded that mine with nuclear waste, they invited survivors back for a final visit. My mother went down into the mine and while there, an engineer guide broke off some of the salt crystals for her from the wall of the mine to take as a memento.

My mother brought the salt crystals back to the United States. Every Passover we scrape a little bit of that salt (along with a larger amount of table salt) into the bowl for our saltwater - now truly the tears of slavery!  
Jonathan Lyon, Berkeley, CA

## **Of Questions, Faith and Freedom: A Personal Exodus By Rabbi John Crites-Borak**

Long before I became a Jew and a rabbi, when I was still a Roman Catholic, I achieved a bit of infamy in my parish for asking difficult questions. Why does God value what we believe more than what we do? Why would a loving God create a Hell? If God is all-powerful, why doesn't God defeat Satan and do away with evil? My priest's answer to all of them was uniquely frustrating and unsatisfactory: it's a matter of faith, which I clearly didn't have. I asked the priest how to get it. "Pray," he said. I told him I prayed and all I ever got were questions. "Pray harder." I did. I got harder ones. One morning after Mass I asked about a particularly difficult religious issue. He glared at me in a furious silence, then pointed his index finger at my heart. "You," he finally uttered through clenched teeth, "you ... are going ... to burn ... for this one." Then he turned and walked away. It was the last time I ever saw him.

As it happened, I was scheduled for a haircut the next day. My barber, a long-time friend, was Jewish. She listened as I told the story. "I don't know why you put up with all that *mishigass*," she exclaimed. "You keep trying to be a Christian, but you're the most Jewish man I know. You think like a Jew. You act like a Jew. You treat others like a Jew. You even think about God like a Jew!"

The only things I really knew about Jews were they wore odd little hats, didn't eat pork and didn't believe in Jesus. Moreover, my family and I viewed all of them with vague suspicion. I didn't believe I'd ever met a Jew before I moved to Los Angeles. Was she sure? "I haven't been inside a synagogue in 20 years," she laughed, "but I know a Jew when I see one."

That afternoon I called five local synagogues at random. "My name is John," I said. "I'm a Catholic, but someone said Judaism might be a better fit for me. What can you tell me about it?" For the record, this is one of the fastest ways to be put through to a rabbi's voice mail. I left five messages.

Only one person, Rabbi Stewart Vogel of Temple Aliyah in Woodland Hills, California, returned my call. He asked me to tell him my story. I did. When I finished he said, "I have bad news for you. We don't have the answer." Then he laughed and added, "Don't get me wrong - we have answers. More than you can count. But we don't have The Answer. On the other hand," he continued, "if you're looking for a place where you can ask life's most profound, difficult and meaningful questions- be willing to accept whatever responses you get to them - then do a bit of studying, thinking and talking about them with others to formulate new questions - and have that be a way of living-- maybe you'll find a home with us." Then he recommended the Introduction to Judaism Program at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. I enrolled out of curiosity. Studying Judaism began as an adventure in learning. I soon realized it was also a homecoming. My questions were welcomed and encouraged as a road to faith that led both outward and inward. They became my exodus from the narrow straights of dogmatic religious conformity to a rich and fascinating world of unbridled curiosity about God and life. In them I found God, and faith. They led me to Judaism and the rabbinate. They set me free.<sup>1</sup>