

HELPFUL TIPS FOR THE SEDER AND PASSOVER

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- Do what you can. Don't feel badly or guilty about not doing or keeping everything in your customary way. Adjustments to the observance of Passover have been considered (allowed) through Jewish history. Keep it familiar, but feel free to improvise. Think of the Seder as both "classical" and "jazzy;" structured and free flowing.
- Remember, Passover is the "Festival of Liberation," not of (double) bondage or oppression. We are living through a certain experience of bondage, let us find liberating ways of coping with it.
- While we have already been cleaning and scouring, implement whatever adjustments work for you. Rid yourself of Hametz by making a contribution to the needy or a food Bank: Popsie's Pantry, Gleaners, local, etc.
- Keep your Seder EASY and ENJOYABLE. Remember, "legumes" (kitniot), which Sephardi Jews have always eaten during the festival, are now considered kosher for Passover for Ashkenazim as well. Follow your most comfortable practice.
- If you want to connect with family and don't have Facebook, Zoom or other social media skills, you may consider just putting a phone on the table. Wish each other love and Gut Yomtov, Hag Samech, Happy Passover! Raise your first cup of wine, and move on, on line or separately.

And remember, **Wash hands!!!** It's an old Jewish practice! Gotta hand it to us!

SUGGESTED ORDER FOR A BRIEF SEDER - you decide what works for you:

(Use whatever Haggadah you like best. While there are 14 steps to the traditional Seder, some parts are broken down for easier directions)

WELCOME THE FESTIVAL (Candleblessing ...shel Yom Tov)

- 1) KIDDUSH - short or full. Add Sheheheyanu
- 2) R'HATS - wash hands (no blessing) Still - Wash well!
- 3) KARPAS - Green springs (parsley dipped in salt water).
Spring and tears; hope in the midst of uncertainty.
Offer your own interpretation; make a wish.
Chew parsley carefully! Make sure you washed it well!
- 4) YAHATZ - Divide the Middle Matza. The bread of "affliction" our ancestors ate during their journey from bondage to freedom. Lots of opportunity for reflection here.
Broken, crumbs. Funny how the Matza never breaks along a straight line, despite those little holes!
Save a piece for later (Afikoman- the after dinner morsel).

5) MAGGID - Telling the story.

You can read your favorite passages from the Haggadah, or weave your own narrative. Don't hesitate to be inventive, expressive, reflective.

- THE FOUR QUESTIONS: What questions do you bring to this year's Seder? Why is this Passover/Pesach/ Seder different from previous ones? Talk about it. No right answers. Share perspectives, worries, hopes, best practices....

Note: Actually, the opening words, "Ma Nistanah" are not so much a question: "WHY is this night...?" but, an exclamation: "HOW different is this night...!" Think of the Ma Nistanah both as a question and as an exclamation. What different responses might you offer or elicit?

-Who are the FOUR SONS or DAUGHTERS of this year's Seder:

Hacham, the Wise;

Rasha, the irreverent;

Tam, the simple minded;

Sheino yodea Lish'ol, the one who doesn't even realize what is going on!

-THE PLAGUES: Is this an 11th plague or kind of combination of all 10. What does "darkness" mean in this context? Diminish your cup for all the suffering that is going on.

- Conversation: Our biblical and pre-modern ancestors understood plagues and illness as "divine punishment" or "test." Modern science has taught us otherwise. How has our understanding of the universe evolved, scientifically and religiously? How can science and religion work cooperatively, one searching for and providing the "cure;" the other, sustaining us in the process of "healing." Mordecai Kaplan commented to the effect that medicine can provide us with health; religion helps us know what to do with it. Or, in Einstein's famous words: "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind." How do medicine and science, on the one hand, and religion and faith communities on the other, help us to deal and cope with illness and adversity. Have you been thinking about these issues during the past weeks? There is a lot of bad science and a lot of bad religion. And Kaplan reminds us that both can be peddled at cheap prices!

- Suggestion: add TEN HOPES, possible solutions, and discuss how we might contribute, individually and collectively to them.

- DAYYENU – A song of thanks. "Dayyenu" ("it would have been enough") is not, as many think, a song of complaint about all the bad stuff. It rather expresses gratitude for freedom, Torah, Shabbat, and the many gifts that despite adversity make our Jewish and human lives meaningful. Compose your own Dayyenu. What are the things that fill your life with "good enough" to endure and move on.

-THE THREE SYMBOLS: Pesach Sacrifice (Lamb Shank - or substitute); Matzah (Bread of poverty, of the "pressed down"); Maror (bitter herbs). Go for it. Lots of room for your own reflections and interpretations.

And what about that Orange? It reminds us that the many segments/wedges can come together to form a beautiful, bright sunny circle. It is both tart and sweet. We are many and we are different, yet we are one.

- HALLEL- Psalms of praise and thanksgiving. Offer a little praise and thanksgiving of those around the table or of others who are helping us through this: responsible government officials, police, fire workers, military, medical providers, teachers, religious and civic leaders and volunteers, and other professionals and business people who are keeping our society as connected and functional as possible during these times of transition.

- 2nd Cup: have a little wine or other libation. Say a blessing, a toast!

- 6) WASH AGAIN: This time with blessing: ... Al netilat yadain- Remember the psalm: "Clean hands and pure heart!"
- 7) TWO BLESSINGS: HAMOTZI AND AL ACHILAT MATZA. Hamotzi is the general pre-meal thanksgiving. Al achilat Matza is said only at the Seder, not during the rest of the days of the holiday. We are grateful for both, life's "ongoing" and "special" nourishing opportunities.
- 8) MAROR: Dip bitter herbs in Sweet Haroset. Say blessing, "al achilat maror". What has sweetened your experience beyond the difficulties we are facing.
- 9) KORECH - we follow Hillel's example and make a little sandwich of Matza, Maror (he would add a piece of lamb), a touch of haroset, and enjoy! No blessing. A little gustatory transition to the main meal.
- 10) EAT - B'te'avon! Enjoy.
- 11) TZAFUN - Find the "hidden matza" – What is it we are "looking for" on this festival?
- 12) BAREKH - the blessing after meal ending with third cup of wine. Time to express gratitude for the Godly and human processes that bring nourishment and to commit to help those in need of sustenance.

- CUPS OF ELIJAH and MIRIAM - sing Eliyahu Hanavi and /or Miriam Haneviah. The Cup of Miriam (water from Miriam's Well during the wilderness trajectory) sustains us for the journey. The Cup of Elijah (fruit of the vine) symbolizes the joy of redemption.

Note: When you welcome Elijah and/or Miriam to your home, don't be over exuberant with handshakes, hugs or kisses. Make sure they wash their hands and stay six feet apart from you and those gathered at your table. Remember, they have been visiting a lot of other homes as well!

Express your hopes for a world redeemed. How will you contribute to it during and after this period of social distancing? The messianic hope for a better future has sustained Israel through difficult times. Today we often speak of it as Tikkun Olam. How will we help to bring Tikkun, repair of the fabric of our communities and the world....?

- 13) HALLEL - More psalms, songs. Some favorites: Adir Hu, Echad mi Yodea, Had Gadya... add your own favorites. "We shall overcome"; "Tefilat Haderekh", Prayer for the Journey, by Debbie Friedman; etc. Modify the songs: what do the numbers "one to thirteen" (Ehad Mi Yodea) mean to you in the present context?

You may count the Omer as we begin the seven week transition from the Festival of Freedom ("from" oppression) towards Shavuot, the Festival Enlightenment (freedom "to" be ourselves through Torah). It is a journey. Hopefully we can celebrate Shavuot, the festival of the giving of the Ten Commandments, face to face, and "Take Two Tablets!

14) NIRTZAH

Fourth cup of Wine and conclusion of the Seder.

L'shanah Haba'ah.... Next year with Jerusalem at peace, the world redeemed and all celebrating together in health and joy with family and friends!

HAG SAMEACH!