

Enhancing Your Passover Seder

In every generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Mitzrayim. "Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how God freed you from it with a mighty hand..." (Exodus 13:3)

1. Draw a picture of Moses leading the Israelites across the Sea onto a large mural paper or poster board. Ask Seder guests to bring photos or draw pictures of themselves. Attach onto the mural. Discuss the passage above.
2. Use a family heirloom at the seder table: this could be a seder plate, a special Kiddush cup, cup of Elijah or cup of Miriam, even a special family recipe. Be sure to talk about this item during the seder, explaining where it came from and its significance to the family. No heirlooms in your family? Start a new tradition and buy or make something new that will become a treasured heirloom.
3. Instead of reading the parts in the Haggadah that tell the Passover story, tell your guests that you are going to begin the story of being slaves in Egypt. When you stop, the next person should continue the story. Remember that each person must use the words "I" and "we" when telling the story. Begin the continuation story by saying something like this:

I remember when we were all slaves in Egypt. What a horrible time that was! I remember being outside in the broiling sun, every day, all day. The heat was unbearable, but not nearly as bad as the work we were forced to do, building cities for the Pharaoh. I remember...

4. At the Passover seder we sing *Dayenu*. It means, "it would have been enough." In other words, this song says, that if God had only done just one thing, it would have been amazing and more than enough-but God did more. Discuss what things in their lives they can say *dayenu* about.
5. During the singing of *Dayenu*, try the Afghani custom of picking up bunches of scallions and "beating" each other on the back and shoulders as a simulation of what the Israelites endured when they were slaves in Egypt. Another interpretation suggests that we admonish ourselves not to yearn for the fleshpots of Egypt and not to forget the Egyptian bondage.
6. Make plague bags children can use during the reading of the plagues. Example of possible items: *Glass of water and red food coloring for blood, plastic/rubber frogs, rice or plastic toy for lice, band-aid or sticker dots for boils, ping pong balls for hail, plastic/rubber toys for insects, wild beasts and cattle disease, blindfold for darkness, plastic skeleton for death of the first born.*
7. After the traditional reciting of the 10 Plagues, ask participants to name 10 things that plague us today.

8. The *Afikoman* - whether your family tradition is to hide the *afikoman* for the children to find or for the children to take it secretly from the seder leader, a point comes in the seder when it is needed to complete the celebration. In the "old days" the ransom for the *afikoman* was often money. Consider some of the following: a story, a song, or a donation to a favorite *tzedakah* in the name of the child holding the *afikoman*, a donation in honor of all the children at the seder, or a tangible gift like a Jewish themed storybook, CD or game.
9. *Kos Miriam* - Miriam's Cup - A new Jewish tradition, which adds a special cup in honor of Miriam, sister of Moses. Miriam played a vital role in the history of our people. The cup of Miriam is a special goblet filled with water and placed on the seder table. Miriam's cup is celebrated either at the beginning of the seder or before reciting the ritual related to the cup of Elijah. (See hand-outs for special readings)
10. Divide the Passover story into scenes. Divide guests into the number of scenes. Tell them that they will have the opportunity to creatively tell one part of the story. Instruct each group to read their scene to each other and then use the arts and crafts materials you have made available. They may write poems, sing songs, pantomime, role-play, etc. to convey the meaning of their scene. Here are 10 possible scenes: Moses' birth, Pharaoh's daughter discovers the Hebrew baby, Moses' childhood, Moses in the desert, Moses returns to Egypt, the 10th plague, the Red Sea, wandering in the desert, the 10 Commandments, observing Passover.

This material was compiled from various sources including, the UAHC website (www.uahc.org), The Jewish Parent Page by Barbara Binder Kadden, V'shinantam-the UAHC National Jewish Teacher's Newsletter, A Different Night Haggadah by Noam Zion, and The Art of Jewish Living by Dr. Ron Wolfson.

כוס מְרִים-Kos Miriam-

The Cup of Redemption

וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ

“And I will bring you into the land.” (Exodus 6:8)

At this point in our seder, we fill a cup for the future, for our redemption is not yet complete. Traditionally, we call upon Elijah the prophet, for our texts tell us that he will herald the messianic age, a time when we are One and at one with God. One tradition suggests that because messiah will come only when we all work together, we each contribute to this cup of redemption by pouring from our wine glasses.

Tonight, like those who have come before us, we set aside a cup for Elijah. But we add a new custom as well, by honoring our prophet Miriam. Miriam linked worlds. She brought Pharaoh’s Daughter to Yokheved. Miriam was a woman of vision. When others saw a chasm, Miriam became a bridge.

According to the midrash, when the Israelites made their way through the desert, Miriam’s wells acted as a way-station for them. Our people stopped and were refreshed by the clear, cold waters. They resumed their journey with a renewed dedication to becoming a people of God as they traveled towards the land of promise.

Tonight we remember Miriam and ask:

Who on our own journey has been a way station to us?

Who has encouraged our thirst for knowledge?

To whom do we look as role-models for our daughters and for ourselves?

Who sings with joy at our accomplishments?

Spend as much time as you wish, discussing these questions. Then, when everyone is ready to continue you may fill small cups with water. Each participant fills Miriam’s Cup with questions, answers, hopes fears, and dreams. The Cup of the Future is a cup that contains all of our longings and all of our fulfillment.

The word תִּיקוּ (Tay-ku) is often used at the end of a Talmudic discussion in which the various opinions seem to be irreconcilable. Although its literal meaning is “Let it stand,” *Tayku* is seen as an acronym for the phrase:

תשבי יתרץ קושיות ובעיות

Tishbi Yetaretz Kushiyyot Ube’ayot

Tayku suggests that there are *some* arguments, both internal and external, that are best left unresolved for the time being – that there are times when we need to step back from our problems.

As we rise to open the door and welcome both Elijah and Miriam, we heed the lesson of *Tayku* and release ourselves from those difficulties and problems that are constricting us, and trust that someday in the future, perhaps in a Messianic era we will find answers to all that is unresolved in our hearts.

Open the door for Miriam and Elijah.

Miriam's Cup

All: We begin our seder with *Kos Miryam*, Miriam's Cup, symbolically filled with *mayim chayim*, living waters from Miriam's Well. Miriam's Cup is a symbol of our past redemption when our people were brought out of Egypt and delivered from slavery. Elijah's Cup, which we will speak of at the end of the *seder*, represents our future redemption, looking forward to the Messianic age when peace will fill the world.

Reader: Miriam's Well was said to hold Divine power to heal and renew. It became a special source of transformation for a people seeking to leave slavery behind them and form a new identity. Throughout our journey as a people, we have sought to rediscover these living waters for ourselves. We remember the sustenance and renewal of God's gift to Miriam with this cup of clear spring water, a reminder of the living waters of Miriam's Well.

Reader: Tonight at our *seder*, let us remember that we are still on the journey. Just as the Holy One delivered Miriam and her people, just as they were sustained in the desert and transformed on our journey to a stronger sense of ourselves as individuals and as one people. May the Cup of Miriam nourish us and give us Inspiration as we embark on our journey through the *haggadah*.

Lift or point to Miriam's Cup. If the cup has not been filled with spring water as part of the preparation for the Seder, it is filled now. Each individual pours water from his or her own water glass into Miriam's Cup.

All: זאת כוס מרים, כוס מים חיים זכר ליציאת מצרים
Zot Kos Miryam, kos mayim chayim. Zeicher L'tziat Mitzrayim.

Reader: This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt.

Reader: These are the living waters, God's gift to Miriam, which gave new life to Israel as we struggled with ourselves in the wilderness.

All: Blessed are You God, Who brings us from the narrows into the wilderness, sustains us with endless possibilities, and enables us to reach a new place.