

# Seder Solutions

*IDEAS FOR MAKING YOUR PASSOVER MORE FUN AND MEANINGFUL*

by Rabbi Debra Orenstein

## **BEFORE THE SEDERS**

1. Volunteer to present a model seder at a local school or church. Nothing will prepare you better for your own seder.
2. When clearing out or searching for chametz (leaven), write a list of your spiritual chametz—habits, thoughts, relationships which may have served you for some time and which you are now ready to renounce. Is there some aspect of your life that is “puffed up” – either arrogant or just taking up too much room? Put your list in the bag with the bread you find, and then burn the paper together with the leaven in the traditional biur chametz (burning of leaven).
3. For parents with more than one child, the morning of biur chametz is a good time to connect with your first-born. This holiday emphasizes the preciousness of the first-born, and this day is designated as a fast of the first-born. Go to synagogue together and you will find many other first-borns there completing the study of a Jewish text. Or study a text together and do a siyyum (ritual for the completion) at home. (Traditionally, those who do a siyyum don’t fast.)
4. When you offer invitations to a seder, give out “homework” assignments as well, in which you ask people to prepare a few comments on a specific reading or theme. You can also ask guests to lead different sections of the Haggadah. Encourage people (especially children) to prepare song parodies or skits to be presented throughout the seder.
5. Similarly, you can ask everyone to bring a favorite text on freedom, or to come prepared to talk about the “freest” moment of their lives. Pepper the readings or “sharings” throughout the traditional Haggadah text, or offer them between courses during the meal.
6. If you think long texts or public speaking might be intimidating, ask each guest to bring a short poem or even a quotation to share on the subject of freedom, miracles, or being spared.
7. If you are a guest, inquire how many people will be at the seder and come prepared with one quote about freedom for everyone. Pass around a hat with quotations on slips of paper, and each person can claim his or her own quotation for Passover.
8. Create some handouts or supplements to make this year different from all other years and to spark discussion.
9. Take it further and create your own Haggadah.
10. To take seriously the instruction “let all who are hungry come and eat,” ask everyone to bring a can of kosher-for-Passover food and donate what you collect to a local food pantry during the intermediate days of the holiday.
11. Or, to live out that same instruction, donate the cost of feeding one guest (or a minyan of guests) to Mazon or another organization fighting hunger.

12. Or invite someone who otherwise wouldn't have a place to go. Call a local Hillel to find a college student far from home or ask local rabbis if anyone studying for conversion might enjoy attending a seder. Think of people who are new in town, low on means, recently bereaved, ill, or otherwise in need of a friendly invitation to a seder meal.
13. Provide the "fixings" for a seder plate, and ask kids to assemble it. You can make up several plates – one per table or one per child; romaine lettuce on some, horseradish on others. Add an orange to your seder plate in honor of the (discredited) saying: "A woman belongs on the bimah the way an orange belongs on the seder plate." If you explain each symbol as the children load the plates, they can serve as the experts at the seder.

### **OVERALL SEDER IDEAS**

14. Do a thematic seder. Apply the teachings of a single great commentator throughout the night. (You could, for example, dress up as Maimonides, act like him, tell his biography in the first person, and then offer Maimonides' teachings on the Exodus for the entire night.) Or look up the customs of the Jews of Ethiopia. Wear typical clothes, make their recipes, research the teachings of Ethiopian rabbis, and tell the history of the Jews of Ethiopia as a modern-day Exodus story.
15. Another way of doing a thematic seder: pick a theme you will explore this year, such as being spared, cultivating inquiry, inner slavery, political oppression, civil disobedience, God as savior, midrash, beginning with disgrace and ending with praise, drama & humor in the story, or "freedom in order to..." Announce the theme in advance, if possible, and center your discussions mostly around that theme.
16. Or list a different theme inside each person's place card. Ask them to uphold that theme throughout the evening's discussion, to make comments that bring it to light, becoming the teacher and advocate of the theme. Then, at the end of the night, discuss how the themes were or weren't a personal fit, and how focusing on a particular theme affected each person's experience of the seder. To add a playful element and keep the children's interest, award a prize for whoever can guess everyone's assigned theme correctly.
17. To make this night different, consider serving in the living room where everyone can sit on couches. If you are in a dining room, set a pillow on each chair. (The upper classes ate while reclining, especially at festive meals.)
18. Make sure everyone in the group has the same Haggadah, but give several (or all) people a second Haggadah. Give a kids' Haggadah to children, the Moss Haggadah to an artist, a historical Haggadah to a history buff. Then ask everyone to share any interesting commentaries from that additional Haggadah.
19. If you are a guest, bring an unusual Haggadah with you, so you can chime in with comments the group wouldn't otherwise hear.
20. If the folks you hang out with aren't the types to prepare shenanigans in advance, songs and skits can be invented at the seder. Divide people into groups, and let each group work up something to present. Assign a different topic to each group or experience three tellings of the Exodus story as a whole.

## FOR PARTICULAR BLESSINGS AND READINGS

### Candlelighting

21. To encourage participation, supply enough candles so that every person over Bar/Bat Mitzvah can light for Passover.

### Kadesh Urechatz

22. There are 15 stages to the Passover seder in the outline we chant or sing. In the ancient Temple, these were the number of steps on the south side of the Temple, leading up to holy space. So, we are ascending, step by step, level by level, in holiness, throughout the seder. There are several other 15's: 15 praises in Dayenu prayer, 15 rungs in the Song of the Sea (from Exodus chapter 15) as written in the Torah scroll; 15 Psalms begin with the words Shir Hama'alot ("a psalm of ascension"). We had to ascend out of the muck and mire of Egypt, not just physically but spiritually. A related idea: In the rabbinic understanding, there are 49 levels of degradation. If you get to 50, there is no coming back. The Israelites hit bottom in Egypt, descending to the 49<sup>th</sup> level. Day by day, from Passover to Shavuot, we climb back up. And on the 50<sup>th</sup> day, when we return to level ground, we receive Torah at Sinai. Questions for your seder table: how do you see the seder as a progression? what are the steps you take to lift yourself – or others - up?

### First Handwashing (without blessing)

23. When washing hands without a blessing, pass around a bowl, cup, and towels, and let each person wash another person's hands. That way, everyone can experience being served, as well as serving. Notice how serving feels when you trade off roles. Imagine how serving would feel, if you always had to serve – i.e., if you were a slave.

### Karpas

24. Consider serving the salad course or other vegetables in addition to parsely for karpas. This prevents people from getting too hungry and lets them concentrate on the telling.

### Ha Lachma Anya

25. Discuss the limits of our willingness to give. Whom would we *not* invite? What need would be too great to meet? How can we get to the redemptive state of "let all...come and eat"?
26. Ask people to bring a symbol of their own enslavement. (Car keys if you feel enslaved by your commute; a measuring tape for someone who struggles with weight, etc. For more privacy, participants can bring a drawing of their oppression on a folded piece of paper.) When reciting "this is the bread of affliction," the matzah is traditionally raised. People can simultaneously raise their symbols and drawings. Discussion can follow about the ways in which we are still enslaved and our plans to reach freedom /Israel by next year.
27. Notice which parts of the prayer are in Hebrew, and which in Aramaic. Discuss why Aramaic (the daily spoken language) might have been chosen for certain sections, and Hebrew for others. Do we use the holy language when talking about the Holy Land? Or might it be considered rude or dangerous to discuss "next year in Jerusalem" in a language that gentile neighbors could understand? When do you use Hebrew in your communications, and what does it mean to you?

### Four Questions

28. Have the youngest and then the oldest person present ask the four questions. This uses a traditional way of engaging young people and adds a new one. It lets everyone know that the questions are not superficial or easily answered. Even the most seasoned and wise among us engage them (as the following paragraph in the Haggadah states).

29. Pool the linguistic talents at your seder table to recite the four questions in every language you can.
30. In the wake of the four questions, solicit additional questions that people want to address over the course of the seder. Then integrate the questions (and answers) into your evening. Possible examples: Why do we open the door on several occasions? What does the Haggadah have to teach us about current events? How has the issue of freedom changed for everyone at the table since last year?
31. In medieval times, adults would engage in odd and surprising behavior to raise children's curiosity. They would grab matzah from one another's plates, or remove the "TV-style" individual tables that were popular before serving the meal. What could you do that would make your guests wonder about the difference and meaning of the seder night?
32. Discuss the meaning of chametz (the focus of the first question). The signature law of eating on Passover is to avoid chametz (leaven). Symbolically, chametz represents pride (being puffed up) and procrastination (waiting for the bread to rise when freedom is calling you). In cleaning for Passover, we strive to eliminate both. In searching for leaven with a candle and feather before the holiday, we look for hidden corners of our lives where these qualities may be lurking. In selling our chametz before the holiday, we set an intention – on purpose and in advance – to divest ourselves of what no longer works in our characters and in our lives. A question for the seder table: Is there anything that has become chametz for you? Once appropriate (perhaps it was fine for 364 weeks out of 365), it may now be fermenting, spoiling, making you spiritually puffy, instead of spiritually lithe.

#### Avadim Hayinu

33. Have shallots at the table (or if you are a guest bring the shallots). Guests can use them to "beat" each other when singing "advadim hayinu" (we were slaves), as per the Sephardic custom.
34. Or, place a bunch of bricks in your front yard, and let everyone bring one to a designated location to build a wall. Do this in silence, except that as each person places his or her brick, s/he says one word or phrase about what slavery is. When all the bricks are moved, sing "advadim hayinu" together.
35. Ask everyone to bring a backpack with a symbol of freedom inside. When you reach the words (vayotzi'eynu ... beyad chazakah) direct people to put on their back packs and march around the table (or the house) for the rest of the paragraph (harei zeh meshubach). This also follows the Sephardic custom. Afterwards, people can "show and tell" regarding what they packed and why.
36. After people have walked around the table, encourage them to run, too. This is fun for the kids, and it also communicates that the Israelites were in a rush to get out. They didn't let the bread rise, and they didn't dawdle. You might care to discuss: Do you feel freer when you run? When have you run toward freedom, and when have you dawdled? When have you run back the other way, toward Egypt?
37. Try singing Avadim Hayinu very slowly, like a song of mourning (the most popular melody is in a minor key). What changes for you? Do any different feelings come up?

38. Discuss seriously the issue of slavery today. We say, “we were slaves” (past tense). For Jews, literal slavery is in the past. But for millions of human beings, slavery (in the form of various modern-day Pharaohs) is literal. The following is excerpted from an essay by Benjamin Skinner titled “Slavery’s Staying Power” in The Los Angeles Times, March 23, 2008. Questions for your seder: how do you define slavery? What can we commit to doing – tonight and beyond?

“One hot June day in 2006, I saw what slavery really meant. In a rundown mansion in a slum of Bucharest, Romania, a pimp offered to sell me a young woman he described as “a blond.” She had bleached hair, hastily applied makeup, and she apparently suffered from Down syndrome. On her right arm were at least 10 angry, fresh slashes where, I can only assume, she had attempted suicide. The pimp claimed that he made 200 euros per night renting her out to local clients. He offered to sell her outright to me in exchange for a used car.

It wasn't the first time I had encountered a slave in bondage. It wasn't even the first time I had been offered a slave for sale. Over five years on five continents, I had infiltrated trafficking networks and witnessed other negotiations to buy and sell human beings. Worldwide, I'd met more than 100 current and former slaves. Many people are surprised to learn that there are still slaves. Many imagined that slavery died along with the 360,000 Union soldiers whose blood fertilized the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment. Many thought that slavery was brought to an end around the world when most countries outlawed it in the 19th century.

In fact, there are more slaves today than at any point in history. Although a precise census is impossible, as most masters keep their slaves hidden, baseline estimates from United Nations and international researchers range from 12 to 27 million slaves. The State Department estimates that 700,000 people -- primarily women and children -- are trafficked across national borders each year, and that doesn't count the millions held in bondage in their own countries.

Let me be clear: By “slaves” I mean, very simply, those who are forced to work, under threat of violence, for no pay beyond subsistence. That is the nice, neat, horrible definition I have used since I began studying the subject in 2001.

In the United States today, we tend to use the word “slave” loosely. Merriam-Webster offers as its first definition of the word, “drudgery; toil.” Well-intentioned activists will say that a worker at a shoe factory in Indonesia is “paid a slave wage” of \$1.25 per hour, despite the fact the worker can walk away from the job at any time. An investment banker in New York will claim to be “worked like a slave” because, despite his six-figure salary, he is required to work up to 18 hours a day on occasion. During his last few years with Warner Bros. Records, Prince wore the word “slave” scrawled across his face to protest a binding contract he couldn't get out of -- even though it paid him \$10-million advances for each album.

But that's not what slavery is, as Rambho Kumar can attest. Kumar was born into wilting poverty in Bihar, the poorest state in India, the country with more slaves than any other, according to U.N. estimates. In 2001, desperate to keep him and his five brothers from starving, his mother accepted 700 rupees (\$15) as an advance from a local trafficker, who promised more money once 9-year-old Rambho started working many miles away in India's carpet belt.

After he received Rambho from the trafficker, the loom owner treated his new acquisition like any other low-value industrial tool. He never allowed Rambho and the other slaves to leave the loom, forcing them to work for 19 hours a day, starting at 4 in the morning. The work itself tore into Rambho's small hands, and when he whimpered in pain, the owner's brother stuck his finger in boiling oil to cauterize the wound -- and then told him to get back to work. When other boys attempted escape or made a mistake in the intricate designs of the rugs, which were destined for Western markets, the owner beat them savagely.

On July 12, 2005, local police, in coordination with activists supported by Free the Slaves, an organization based in Washington, liberated Rambho and nine other emaciated boys.

Even in the United States, low-end Justice Department figures estimate that there are 50,000 people languishing in hidden bondage at any one time. On March 4, for instance, two south Florida women were convicted on charges of enslaving and torturing a teenage Haitian girl named Simone Celestine. The two women face 10 years in prison. Celestine was freed by the FBI last year after being held as a domestic slave for six years, during which time she was beaten with closed fists, forced to shower outside with a garden hose, rented to others, and not allowed to attend school. Celestine's case is eerily similar to that of Williathe Narcisse, a courageous young woman who escaped domestic slavery in suburban Miami. Narcisse, who was 12 when she was freed in 1999, had been smuggled into the U.S. from Haiti to work as a domestic servant. During her three years in slavery, she was required to keep the family's home spotless, eat garbage and sleep on the floor. She was repeatedly raped by the family's adult son.

Slavery in all its forms is a crime against humanity. Rambho's bondage is no more or less tolerable than that of the young woman in Bucharest. Both are abominations, and are our collective burden to abolish."

39. Rabbi Joshau Levine-Grater shares this question and answer: How is this night exactly the same as all other nights? Tonight, again, people will be forced to work as slaves.

#### The Four Children

40. According to the Sfat Emet, you can find a hint of the four children/sons in two places in the Bible. First, the four well-known Torah verses, where we are enjoined to teach our children about the Exodus. In three of those verses a child asks a question, and in one verse no question is asked. (Hence the Mechilta deduces four types, one of whom is "does not know how to ask.") The second source is Psalms: "With the [one who does not know how to ask and awaits kindness] you will show yourself merciful; with the simple one, be simple; with the inquiring [or pure or enlightening] one, provide clarification; and with the perverse one, enter into contention. This is a creative translation, adapted in light of the four children, from Psalms 18: 26-27.
41. Discuss how the four children may represent different stages of life, different parts of each person, or different generations of Jewish immigrants to the U.S.A. With which child do you most identify this year?
42. Since both the wicked and the wise son say "to you," what distinguishes the two "to you's"? It may be a difference in tone of voice. What's-it-to-ya? (disrespectful tone) vs. What are all these things? (curious tone). It may be a difference in inquiry. The wise son asks for details on the testimonies, statutes, and laws. The wicked son just asks "what is this "avodah" – this ritual. He uses a term that could even refer to "avodah zarah," idol worship, as if to imply "all this Passover is just the same as idol worship." In the verse introducing the statement attributed to the wicked child, Ex. 12:26, the verb is "yomru." Perhaps wicked children are *telling* their parents something, not truly asking.
43. The Four Daughters: A Reading from *The Journey Continues: The 1997 Ma'ayan Passover Haggadah*. The daughter in search of a usable past. Mah hi omeret? What does she say? Why didn't the *Torah* count women among the '600,000 men on foot, aside from children' who came out of Egypt? And why did Moses say at Sinai, 'Do not go near a woman,' addressing only the men, as if revelation was not meant for us as well?" Because she already understands that Jewish memory is essential to our identity, teach her that history is made by those who tell the tale. If Torah did not name and number women, it is up to her to fill in the empty spaces of our holy texts.

The daughter who wants to erase her difference. *Ma hi omeret?* Can't one just be a Jew? Why must you keep pushing your questions into every text? And why are these women's issues so important to you?" "To you" and not "to me." Since she so easily forgets the struggles of her mothers and sisters, you must set her teeth on edge by saying, "I thank God every morning for the blessing of being a woman."

And the daughter who does not know that she has a place at the table. *Ma hi omeret?* What does she say? "What is this?" Because she doesn't realize that her question is, in itself, a part of the Seder tradition, teach her that the *Haggadah* is an extended conversation about liberation, and tell her that her insights and questions are also text.

And the daughter who asks no question. You must say to her, "Your questions, when they come, will liberate you. This is how it is and has always been with your mothers and grandmothers. From the moment Miriam and the midwives questioned Pharaoh's edict until today, every question we ask helps us leave Egypt farther behind."

44. Some see the four children as corresponding to the four worlds: Atzilut (the world of pre-cognition and wisdom beyond words) is sometimes attributed to the one who does not know how to ask; Bri'ah (the world of knowing) is attributed to the simple child, who wants to understand; Yetzirah (the world of feeling, including all the storms and drama of emotions) is attributed to the "wicked" or wayward child; Asiyah (the visible, practical world of doing, the plane on which we – mostly – exist) is attributed to the wise child, who wants to know all about the Passover "doings." There are also traditions which ally the wise child with atzilut, the wicked with bri'ah, the simple with yetzirah, and the one who does not know how to ask with Asiyah. *The Breslov Haggadah* says concerning Four Children and Four Worlds: "Four Children – the wise, the wayward, the simple, and the sleeping; four worlds. All are essential to the Divine Plan of Creation. Each manifests a different aspect of the Divine. All the children, all the Jewish souls, are integral to the Jewish people. They are symbolic of the four levels of Jewish Awareness. All are intrinsic to God's plan for humanity. Each is imbued with a unique way of perceiving the Divine. Only together is the unity of the Jewish people complete.... We must integrate the positive elements and rechannel the negative. As we hear the voices of the children, as we learn how to handle them, let us also learn how to deal with the voices of the different selves inside us."

"Arami Oved Avi: My Father Was a Wandering Aramean/A Worshipper of Idols"

45. This reading from Deuteronomy 26:5-8 was spoken by pilgrims delivering their first fruits to the Temple on Shavuot. What is it doing here, in the Passover Haggadah? The Mishnah specifies that we "begin [the seder] with disgrace and conclude with praise." Shmuel, a famous third century rabbi, believed that the disgrace of the Passover story was, simply, that we were slaves. Rav, his study partner and counter-point, believed that the disgrace was our own ancestral history of idol worship. The great freedom we won on Passover was not physical (as reflected in The Four Questions and Avadim Hayinu), it was spiritual (as reflected in Arami Oved Avi and The Four Children). Notice that both views are preserved in the Haggadah!
46. Try telling the story personally, as in: "My grandfather was a wandering Romanian..." Follow the language in the Haggadah: where did they travel, what gifts did they bring? How did you end up here? Is this a Passover story?

Plagues

47. Use hand puppets or stuffed animals to represent the ten plagues (use toy frogs, bugs, and animals; a blindfold for darkness, cotton or ping-pong balls for hail, red food coloring for blood, etc.).

48. Traditionally, Jews take a drop of wine out of our wine cups while reciting each of the ten plagues. In that way, we lessen our joy and celebration and express our regret that Egyptians had to suffer. In addition, take out ten more drops from your cup and (silently and spontaneously) name ten costs to claiming your own freedom. Break up into groups of two or three to discuss what costs came up for each of you and whether/when/how we are willing to be free.
49. The Torah promises that any plague which occurred in Egypt will never happen to the Jewish people. As a result, the Rabbis “multiplied” plagues, finding justification in the text for why there were actually more than ten plagues. If you add up all the alternative numbers given in the Haggadah, plus the original ten, plus the three words of Rabbi Yehudah’s acronym for the plagues, the total comes to 613. The gematria adds up to say, “In every moment you have an option: mitzvah or plague. Choose.” Along the same lines is an insight based on the Rabbinic teaching that God created the world with ten pronouncements (“Let there be light” is the first.) According to Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, because the Egyptians denied the Power that created the universe in ten phrases, they were made to know that Power in ten plagues.

#### Dayeynu

50. Discuss gratitude and acquisition. What would be “enough” in your life? What is “enough” in American culture? Is the beginning of a blessing or a partial answer to a prayer generally enough to elicit gratitude in you, or do you need everything in order before you can feel grateful or happy?
51. *Dai* and *Dayenu* are etymologically related to the word *yad*, or hand. “Enough” means “my hands are full.” And sometimes a handful is enough.
52. The Hafatrah for the Shabbat before Passover is from the prophet Malachi, and includes this promise: “Behold, I will open the windows of heaven, and pour out blessings for you, without limit (*ad bli dai*; literally, until no enough). The Talmud interprets this unusual phrase to mean, “you will be so blessed, that your lips will wear out (*b’la*) from saying enough (*dai*).” May we be so blessed, and so grateful!

#### Charoset and Korech/Hillel Sandwich

53. Create a charoset taste-test, using recipes from different regions around the world and different Passover cookbooks. Then discuss the meaning of charoset as you sample. Remember the two basic allusions of charoset: *zecher letit* (building materials) and *zecher latapuach* (apple trees). (For more on charoset, see the article by Ruth Fagen in *Lifecycles 2: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life* and the poem below.)
54. Haroset – a poem by Richard Levy to share at your seder. The haroset, a mixture of apples, nuts, wine, and spices/Represents the mixture of clay and straw/From which in bondage/We made our bricks./It recalls as well/The women of Israel/Who bore their children secretly/Beneath the apple trees of Mitzrayim./And like the apple tree/Which brings forth fruit and only then/Sprouts leaves to protect it,/Our heroic mothers bore children/Without any assurance of security or safety./We recall this beautiful, militant devotion/Which sweetened the misery of slavery/As we dip our bitters/In the sweet haroset./It is the story of this night:/Bitter and sweet,/Sadness and joy,/Tales of shame that end/In praise./It is the story of our life.

#### Afikomen

55. Be playful about the afikomen. Award prizes for those who find it, or let the children engage in collective bargaining.

56. Just as the Paschal sacrifice had to be eaten completely, the afikomen is traditionally finished down to the last crumb. This is a good excuse for an interlude of musical chairs. (In lieu of recorded music, the seder leader or one of the kids can sing Passover songs facing away from the group and periodically stop suddenly.) Each person who loses a seat takes a chunk of the afikomen matzah to eat until it is all gone.
57. Try reversing your afikomen custom, if it has lost its luster. If adults generally hide the matzah, let the children hide it and require the adults to look—or vice versa.

#### Leshanah Haba'ah Beyerushalayim

58. When you recite “Next year in Jerusalem,” take the opportunity to talk about what that means. How *would* Passover be different if you celebrated it in Israel? In what ways does Jerusalem represent redemption to you? What commonalities exist between the High Holidays and Passover, such that we say “Next year in Jerusalem” every six months—once at the end of Yom Kippur and now toward the conclusion of the seder? What is the spiritual cleansing that goes along with physical cleaning of Passover? What is the physical manifestation that goes along with the spiritual cleansing of High Holidays? What do chametz and tashlich have in common?

### **WORDS AND SYMBOLS**

#### **Some Fun Facts About Key Passover Terms & Items**

59. Egg – The egg stands for the cycle of life – birth, death, and renewal. In Jewish tradition, round foods, like eggs, are eaten during shiva (mourning). The roasted egg on the seder plate also represents one of the two sacrifices made at the ancient Temple in Jerusalem on Passover.
60. Carpas – Parsley is the most common “carpas,” but any vegetable over which you say “borei pri ha’adamah” will do. Some people serve potatoes. This symbol of renewal and springtime is paired with salt-water tears, conveying the bittersweetness of the Exodus story and of the free lives we live.
61. Matzah – The bread of affliction (lechem oni) is also the bread of freedom and triumph. Matzah was actually a popular food to feed to slaves, since it “sticks to your ribs” and fills you up for an extended time. But the Israelites transformed it from a slave food to a free person’s food, when they rushed out of Egypt, refusing to give their bread time to rise.
62. Charoset (see 53 and 54 above).
63. Zroa – The roasted shank bone represents one of the two sacrifices offered for Passover in the ancient Temple and, of course, the original paschal sacrifice. The Hebrew word zroa also reminds us that God took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (zroa).
64. Pesach – This refers, of course, to the Passover sacrifice of the lamb. The word Pesach means to pass over. It also means to straddle, as in angels who straddled the doorways of the Israelites, to protect them. The word Pesach calls to mind the challenge of the prophet Elijah, who asked Jews worshipping Baal: How long will you straddle (poschim) between two opinions? Either we serve God or we serve idols. This is a true challenge to us on Passover. There are many idols, many Pharaohs, but there is only one God.
65. Sheep – the animal the Israelites sacrificed was considered a god by the Egyptians. (Quite a statement, then, to sacrifice a paschal lamb!)

66. Marror – Bitter herbs are eaten twice during the seder, once by themselves and a second time with matzah. Some people make the Hillel sandwich with both charoset and marror. The Talmud lists several vegetables that qualify as bitter, two of which are often put on the seder plate: chazeret (usually romaine lettuce) and marror (usually horseradish). Discuss around the table: What food – or other symbol – best represents the bitterness of slavery for you?
67. Note that many Passover symbols have both a positive (redemptive, praising) quality and a negative (oppressive, shameful or tearful) quality. Even the bitter marror is mixed with sweet charoset and/or calming matzah. A key message of the holiday is that we have the freedom to choose. Will this bread forever represent our hard times and slavery, or will it come to mean that we are free? Will tears overcome the springtime or vice versa? Will the wine cause shame (remember Noah) or sanctity (remember the Kiddush)? Jews are experts in the transformation of symbols and destinies. In one powerful, contemporary example, we took the iconic symbol of oppression during the Holocaust – the Star of David –, and chose to preserve it on the Israeli flag. Based on these ideas, do you see anything new in the symbols on the table this year? Do you wish to add any symbols to your seder table?

### 68. Passover Preparation Exercise

A version of this chart was originally given to me as a handout, but I can no longer remember by whom. If anyone knows its source, please inform me, so that I can offer attribution.

To relate to these quotes experientially, I highly recommend reading the verses and the column headings aloud in the following order: Read each trigger quotation (in the center) aloud. After you read a verse, read aloud the words at the top of the left-hand column, and complete the sentence based on what the verse sparks in you. Record your sentence(s) in the blank to the left of the quotation. Then read the quote aloud again, followed by the words at the top of the right-hand column. Again, fill in the ellipsis. Record what the verse triggers in relation to liberation and redemption from Egypt.

You may imagine that you will feel silly following the reading and writing instructions, but that feeling soon passes, as speaking the words focuses your thoughts and brings new ideas to the fore. Writing – especially “automatic,” uncensored, and unplanned writing – helps to tap into and expand your awareness.

A sweet, kosher, and happy Passover to you! –Rabbi Debra Orenstein

I am still in Egypt when/if/upon whether/with/as soon as ...	Trigger Quotations	I go forth from Egypt when/if, upon/whether/with/as soon as ...
	I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Ex. 20:2)	
	God has taken and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be unto God a people of inheritance, as you are today. (Deut.4:20)	
	I will be hallowed among the Children of Israel. I am Adonai who hallows you, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. (Lev. 22:31-32)	
	The seventh day is a Sabbath to God, on it you shall not do any manner of work. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. (Deut.5:14-15)	
	You shall not pervert the justice due to the stranger, or to orphans, nor take the widow’s raiment in pledge.. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and Adonai your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I command you to do this thing. (Deut. 24:17-18)	
	That you tell your children and your children’s children what I have wrought on Egypt and My signs and wonders...; that you may know I am God. (Ex. 10:2)	
	As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt, I will show [you] marvelous things. (Micha 7:15)	