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PESACH— THE FREEDOM STORY

ASK any Jewish child what the eight-day holiday of *Pesach*—Passover—is about and that child is likely to answer: “It’s when we eat *matzah* because when the Jews fled from Egypt they didn’t have time to wait for their bread to rise.”

And while this answer is correct, it does not emphasize the pivotal theme of Pesach: the Jewish people’s liberation from Egyptian slavery, an event which changed the Jewish people forever.

In each generation, Jews experience and reexperience that momentous liberation with the annual celebration of the Passover holiday. As we participate in the *seder*—the home service—each person acknowledges that she/he personally moved from slavery to freedom.

Passover occurs in the spring in March or April. It is celebrated for eight days in most communities, although in Reform synagogues and in Israel people celebrate for seven. The first two and last two of the eight days are those in which we focus on family and rest, not work and school. Seder is celebrated on the first two nights.

GREETINGS



“*Hag Sameach*—Happy Holiday” is the greeting for the Passover holiday.



HOME TRADITIONS

Jews observe Passover by telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt in whichever ways it can best be understood—in the local language, with music, art, drama; eating matzah, the historic unleavened bread that Jews ate while wandering in the desert after the Exodus; and by avoiding *hametz*, a fermented mixture of any one of five types of grains used in basic food products.

Preparation for Passover

Each person prepares for Passover differently in light of one's choices regarding Jewish observances. Preparation for Passover may include a full spring cleaning in the house, with special concentration on the kitchen, removing all hametz from the house, and bringing out dishes and utensils only used for Passover.

Others may simply put aside those products which contain hametz and get ready to celebrate the holiday. No matter what your choices are, the essence is to mark the significance of this holiday.



PASSOVER IN THE U.S. ARMY

During Passover of 1971 my husband was stationed with the U.S. Army in Munich. We'd been married a little over a year and this was the first time we would be making our own seders. Needless to say, it was a little daunting to prepare for Passover far from home in a country we perceived as hostile.

But we had assistance. First, the Jewish Welfare Board sent "kosher for Passover" canned matzah ball soup, matzah, and other Passover food to armed forces personnel throughout the world. We had the basics.

Then the Jewish army chaplain in Munich instructed us on many points. For the first time we cleaned our kitchen to remove all hametz,

even though at that time we didn't have dishes just for Passover. As we cleaned, there was a tremendous feeling of Jewish pride as we continued the ancient Passover ritual in post-Holocaust Germany!

And even today, in support for our women and men serving abroad, we can send contributions (a solo seder kit costs \$12) to the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council (formerly known as the Jewish Welfare Board) at: Women's Organizations Services, c/o JWB Associates, 15 East 26th Street, New York, NY 10010-1579. Indicate this is for Passover food and try to send it by February.

—P.Z.M.

What Is Hametz?

Although hametz is technically the fermented mixture of various grains, it symbolically represents the remnants of the bitter Egyptian slave experience. Jews rid themselves of hametz to reexperience freedom from Egyptian bondage, and that is why hametz, the symbol of oppression, is forbidden on Passover.

The foods not permitted on Passover include any mixture of flour and water that is allowed to rise—in other words, what we call breads. Hametz can be made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt. People from European (Ashkenazic) traditions also omit rice, millet, corn, and most beans. Foods such as breads, crackers, cereals, muffins, cakes, and all liquids (including hard liquor) made from those same ingredients are not permissible Passover foods.

For Passover, Jews buy products labeled “kosher for Passover”: matzah, matzah balls and mixes, cakes, processed foods, vinegars, wines, and frozen foods. In addition, there are several products that can be purchased as always, provided they are bought new for the holiday: fresh fruits and permissible vegetables, coffee, sugar, tea, salt, pepper, milk, eggs, fish, and meat.

If you have specific questions about anything relating to food for Passover, call up a local synagogue and get some personal advice. Slightly different guidelines for Passover observance exist: An updated kosher directory for Passover is distributed yearly by The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations. Write for one at 45 West 36th Street, New York, New York 10017. The Conservative movement adheres to guidelines published by Isaac Klein in *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979). The Reform movement follows practices outlined in *Gates of the Seasons*, edited by Peter S. Knobel (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1983).

Preparation for Seders

Because Passover in its entirety can appear overwhelming, we recommend breaking the whole into manageable parts. As such it becomes a project with specific tasks to be completed by specific times. Use lists to keep the plans and details in order for this year and next. (Even now, after we figure we have a combined experience of having organized over fifty seders, lists help.)

To begin planning, you might consider these questions: Are you having seder at home or are you going as a group to the temple seders? Are you inviting or are you being invited?

Consider inviting those new neighbors, immigrants, or single adults that your local temple may know would appreciate a personal invitation to seder.



If seder is happening at your home, your lists might include notes on these questions: Do you have enough space in the rooms available for the crowd, or can you improvise to use the living room for the seder? Do you need extra tables and chairs (consider renting from a business that delivers, sets up, and picks up)? Can you plan a seating chart that will facilitate a friendly feeling when new and old friends gather for the first time? Can you hire help to serve and clean up so that you can be “free” at the seder?

You may set your table a day ahead of time. It can be a group activity in which all members of the household may participate. Set the plates, silverware, napkins, wine and water glasses, small bowls for salt water (either at individual places or several communal bowls), and individual smaller plates on which to eat the ritual foods.



BALANCING FAMILY SEDERS

An old joke goes, “Why are there two seders?” Answer: “One to go to his family and one to go to hers.” And while, of course, this isn’t the true reason for two seders, it certainly comes in handy. But what about seder with friends?

Such problems the Jews fleeing Egypt didn’t have to worry about, but we do. And the best way to deal with these potentially sticky situa-

tions is to discuss them openly and consider alternatives that meet your needs.

Some options: a) a third seder (oh, God!); b) rotate between one seder for family and one for friends; c) invite everybody together to the same seder or the synagogue seder; d) solve the problem by going away to one of the hotels that offer vacation plans for all of Passover week!



Selecting a Haggaddah

People will be coming to the seder from different experiences, so consider carefully the *Haggaddah* that you will use.

Selecting a Haggaddah that fits the needs of your household is a challenging task. They vary in tone, length, religious and political views, clarity of typeface, and graphics.

Some Haggaddahs provide side-by-side translation of the Hebrew text. Some even include transliteration of the Hebrew prayers into English letters, which is very helpful when including non-Hebrew readers.

Included here are several Haggaddahs that might appeal to you:

A Passover Hagadah. Editor, Rabbi Herbert Bronstein. New York: Central Rabbinis (Reform), 1974. A nice contemporary selection of traditional prayers and thought-provoking readings illustrated to enhance the themes. Useful with varied ages. Plan your seder and figure out in advance which readings to include or skip.

Maxwell House Deluxe Edition Hagadah. Editor, Rabbi Bernard Levy. New York: General Foods Corporation, 1982. This Haggaddah is found in many homes . . . thanks to Maxwell House Coffee. It is a basic (Orthodox) Haggaddah with an archaic English translation. However, the price is right and it is useful.

The Animated Haggadah: A Text for Children. Rony Oren and Uri Shinar. Woodhaven, New York: Scopus Films, 1985. A delightful Haggaddah written for elementary-school readers illustrated by Rony Oren's claymation. Look for the accompanying activity book.

On the Wings of Freedom: The Hillel Hagadah for the Nights of Passover. Editor and translator, Rabbi Richard Levy. Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, 1989. Good explanations, soulful Hebrew translations, gender-neutral language, spiritual sensitivity. Plan your seder, selecting prayer and reading alternatives that fit your guests.

The Passover Hagadah. Editor, Rachel Rabinowicz. New York: Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative), 1982. Dramatic, colorful illustrations. Good directions and explanations for the leader.

Gates of Freedom. Editor, Rabbi Chaim Stern. Bedford, New York: New Star Press, 1981. Good use of Hebrew transliterations alongside the Hebrew and English. Contemporary readings and interpretations; lovely illustrations. Useful with children.

A Family Hagadah. Editor, Shoshana Silverman. Rockville, Maryland: Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1987. A simple Haggaddah with clear discussion topics set side-by-side with the text. Great for seder leaders with clever ways to include many generations.

My Very Own Haggadah. Judyth Robbins Saypol. Rockville, Maryland: Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1974. A simple Haggaddah for early readers; children can color it in. Includes musical notations.

You can purchase Haggaddahs from bookstores throughout the country or through catalogues.

Planning the Seder Service

To make the seder meaningful, the leaders must take time to prepare. Although sometimes one person leads the seder, in many homes the responsibility is shared. Parts of the seder can be assigned ahead of time to encourage involvement by



individuals or families. Guests might bring toys, drawings, or puppets to illustrate parts of the service.

Consideration of the starting time and length of the seder is important. How long can the children—or the adults—sit, talk, and discuss meaningfully until dinner is served? Plan the highlights of the seder accordingly.

Use the time the children are away from the table to enhance the adult discussions. All in all, each participant should feel included in the seder experience.

What time do you plan to end the seder? Plan to end dinner in time to do the concluding service. Focus on the highlights of the conclusion of the seder.

Seder Plate



The focus of the seder table is a seder plate, which holds the ritual foods. The seder plate can be an ordinary plate large enough to hold all the items, or it can be more elaborate, specially designed for the holiday. Some are made from ceramics, silver, copper, or brass. They often are decorated with images from the Passover story.

On the seder plate we place:

1. *Karpas*—a green leafy vegetable which is a reminder of springtime. People use parsley or any type of lettuce. Jews of Eastern European origin often use potatoes because their ancestors used potatoes (green vegetables were scarce!). We dip the karpas in salted water at the beginning of the service to remind us of the tears of slavery.
2. *Maror*—bitter herbs which remind us of the pain of slavery. Use either romaine lettuce or, for the hearty folk, use pieces of fresh horseradish. Cut some pieces ahead of time and place the horseradish root on the seder plate.
3. *Zeroah*—the roasted shankbone, symbol of the Passover sacrifice in the ancient Temple. Order from the butcher in advance. For the veggies, feel comfortable with a roasted beet or yam.
4. *Charoset*—a mixture of fruits, nuts, wine, and spices, which reminds us of the mortar that the Jews used to build Egyptian pyramids. Although various recipes abound, combinations of apples, nuts, and cinnamon, or cooked figs, pears, and apricots with cinnamon are most popular (see “**Recipes**”).
5. *Betzah*—a roasted egg, symbol of the Passover sacrifice made at the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Remember to hard-boil it first, then roast it in the oven, to prevent the “egg all over the oven” scene . . . an experience you do not want.

Matzah

Also found on the table is enough matzah for all. Commercially produced matzah is available in many supermarkets. Some people prefer *matzah shmurah*, round, hard, handmade matzah, which can be purchased at specialty stores.

The matzah is placed in a napkin or matzah cover specially made with three inside pockets. The middle matzah, the *afikoman*, is used as part of the conclusion of the seder. Afikoman means dessert in Greek and is the last food eaten during the seder. (See “**Activities**” for afikoman customs.)

Wine

Wine or grape juice is needed for the four cups of wine. Four cups of wine are



specified in the service because four different verbs are found in the Haggadah to describe being freed from bondage: “I am the Lord your God and I will *free* you . . . *deliver* you . . . *redeem* you . . . and *take* you . . . to be my people.”



OF SWEET AND NOT-SO-SWEET WINE

At both our houses for Passover the variety of kosher for Passover wine on the table rivals a wine cellar. We don't stick only to the traditional sweet wine (no, this is not required for Passover), but have kosher wine varieties from California, France, Italy, Spain, Israel. Some of these wines

are dry, some semidry, but there's something for everyone's palate.

A fun activity prior to Passover is a wine-tasting party. Invite friends and enjoy sampling the different varieties for your seder table.



Additional Ritual Items

Also placed on the table are a wine cup for Elijah the prophet, who, according to tradition, visits every home at Passover, candlesticks for the holiday, salt water for dipping, matzah covers, and afikoman bag. (See “Activities” to help you make some of these ritual items; buying them is not necessary.) Some people add pillows at every seat to represent the ancient custom in which free people reclined at a feast.

Searching for Hametz

On the night before the first seder many people search for hametz in their homes. Materials needed are a feather, a candle (or a flashlight for safety), and a plastic bag. One person hides pieces of bread throughout the house that were saved specifically for this purpose. Others then search by the candle's light for the last remains of the year's old harvest. Another person sweeps the area underneath the bread with the feather and scoops the hametz into a plastic bag.

As you begin the search, recite the following blessing: Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who allows us to prepare for Passover.

The next morning, you may gather the saved hametz and burn it in the backyard. Once everything is burned, recite the following: We have knowingly removed all hametz from our home and our hearts and are ready to experience Passover freedom.

THE SEDER

Most Haggaddahs will begin the seder, which literally means the service order, with the listing of its sections. Included here is an overview of the major sections:

1. *Halachma Anya*—This the Bread of Our Affliction: This section invites all who are hungry to come and eat alongside the Jewish people.

This can be accomplished prior to the holiday: Give all hametz—leavened foods—to a food pantry. Send a check to Sova, the Jewish food pantry in Los Angeles (Sova, JCCA, 5870 West Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036), or the national organization that feeds the poor or homeless, Mazon (Mazon: A Response to Jewish Hunger, 2940 Westwood Blvd., Suite 7, Los Angeles, CA 90064), or contribute to Oxfam America (115 Broadway, Boston, MA 02116). In addition, synagogues and Jewish federations have special appeals for funds to provide Passover food for the Jewish poor.

2. *Ma Nishtana*—Why Is This Night Different?: This is probably the most well-known section of the seder as children learn to sing it from an early age. This phrase begins the four questions that note the distinction between Passover and all other nights of the year. Usually the youngest child sings the questions.

These questions set the tone for the telling of the Passover story. Encourage discussion around these questions. In addition, what other questions might you ask? What additional aspects of the seder are not clear? Try to have young and old ask and answer the questions.



FAMOUS PASSOVER QUESTIONS, OR “WHO ATE THE BRISKET?”

As in all events that are planned for and anticipated in advance, Passover offers myriad possibilities for things to go wrong. But some Passover disasters create family stories that live on with a life of their own, to be enjoyed over and over again—after the shock of the incident.

The case of the missing brisket: Friends of ours cooked their kosher brisket early the day of the first seder. They left the brisket on top of the stove

and went out shopping. When they returned, the entire brisket was gone. It had simply disappeared!

After a complete search of the house and yard, they found a tiny piece left near the doghouse. Their dog had eaten the entire brisket—and the kosher butchers were already closed for the holiday! Luckily they had helpful friends!





3. *Avadeem Hayeenu*—We Were Slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt: This section illustrates that all of us, even today, would still be slaves in Egypt if the great Exodus had not occurred.

Each Jew can therefore reexperience the horror of slavery. No matter how successful, how influential, how intelligent, how rich, Jews are still obligated to tell and retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The retelling of that pivotal Jewish redemption empowers each person to pass on the gift of freedom to the next generation.

4. *Arba Banim*—The Four Children: Four different children with different interests and abilities are described in this section. Four types of children are highlighted to stress that all people must be taught, guided, and instructed in ways unique to that individual. Considering that the Haggaddah dates from approximately the second century, it is remarkable that the rabbis understood even then the need for individualized learning.

Learning is a personal experience, and learning about the Exodus can be shaped to meet the different social, educational, and emotional needs of each person. How can we use different teaching techniques in the seder? Act out parts of the service, use props, make poems, design a desert backdrop, or taste the foods.

5. *Arami Oved Avi*—My Father Was a Wandering Aramean: This section reveals the early history of the Jewish people and the reasons that they moved south into Egypt.

In the Haggaddah, below each paragraph of this text, are further interpretations. Look for a Haggaddah that treats this section in a way that is interesting to you. Enhance it with “actors” who appear in costume and dramatize their roles.

6. *Eser Makot*—The Ten Plagues: The plagues that were rained upon the Egyptians are recited. A drop of wine is removed from each cup at the mention of each plague. In this way Jews recognize the pain of their enemies, and their own joy is reduced because of the acknowledgment of other human suffering.

Some Haggaddahs add modern interpretations of plagues: What plagues do we experience today? Are they sent by God? What plagues must we rid ourselves of to experience a modern redemption?

We conclude this section with the singing of *Dayyanu*, the song that acknowledges that even one of God’s great acts “would have been enough.” In this song Jews express gratitude for all the acts that God performed for their survival.

7. *Rabban Gamliel Haya Omer*—Rabbi Gamliel Said: The central symbols of the seder are explained—the shankbone, the matzah, and the maror. The Haggaddah presents explanations of the symbols, but feel free to add your own interpretations.

8. *Bchol Dor V’dor*—In Every Generation: Each individual must see him/herself as having been personally redeemed by God through the exodus experience. This

section points to the theological point of Passover—each Jew was liberated by God from Egyptian slavery. At that moment, each person experienced political liberation and spiritual freedom.

At the seder other liberations from a contemporary Egypt might be discussed: the experiences of Holocaust survivors and the liberation of Soviet, Iranian, and Ethiopian Jews.



PASSOVER AND THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

Along with the exodus from Egypt, there is a modern-day liberation attempt that occurred at Passover. During Passover of 1943 the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, reduced to a tiny remnant and without food or supplies, rose up against armored German soldiers. For several days this tiny group stopped the nazi war machine. Although ultimately the uprising was crushed, the Jews demonstrated to the world their belief in liberation.

In "The Diary of Chaim Kaplan," the author, who did not survive the Warsaw Ghetto

although his diary did, details the existence of the Jews during the years behind the walls of the ghetto. One of the most compelling comparisons is the difference in each successive Passover—from the first one, when the Jews had matzah and other Passover food, until the last, when without food and hope they rose up in one final challenge.

As we celebrate this holiday, may we truly appreciate the privilege to openly celebrate in freedom.



9. The concluding blessings of the seder praise God and stress the hope of future redemption for all people. Eat the afikoman, open the door for the Prophet Elijah, and conclude with the last glass of wine, saying, "Next year in Jerusalem."

The Last Days

The final day (or days) of Pesach is a full holiday; no work takes place and specific holiday prayers are added to the daily liturgy. Candles are lit with the onset of sundown, Passover *Kiddush* is recited, and the matzah blessed.

On the evening of the last day, *Yizkor* candles are lit for beloved relatives who are remembered.



SYNAGOGUE TRADITIONS

Morning Services

The synagogue customs for Passover are similar to those for Sukkot and Shavuot. We read specific Torah portions linked to the holiday theme and sing *Hallel*, the holiday psalms.

The intermediate days of the holiday are considered “half-holidays” in which we recite part of the Hallel psalms. On the Shabbat during Pesach, many congregations sing the ancient love poetry of Song of Songs, which highlights the love relationship between a man and a woman and, some say, also the love relationship between God and the Jewish people.

During the final Passover morning service in synagogue, the Yizkor service is recited. Jews remember both their personal loved ones and the martyrs of the Jewish people.



INSIGHTS

Names of the Holiday

Passover is best known as *Hag HaPesach*, referring to the biblical story in which God passed over the Jewish people while killing the Egyptian firstborn (Exodus 11:4–5; 12:23). This horrid tenth plague influenced Pharaoh to free the Israelite people from their four-hundred-year bondage.

Passover is also known as *Hag Hamatzot*, the holiday in which Jews eat matzah, the unleavened bread.

Its additional name is *Hag HaAviv*, the springtime holiday, in which agricultural and spiritual signs of spring add to the festivities.

Freedom to Choose

With the benefit of freedom gained through the exodus, we now have the responsibility to choose. We choose to work, to rest, to worry, to celebrate, to believe. Consider the variety of choices we make as individuals, as members of groups, as families. What values support our choices for a rich spiritual life?

How can you gain strength as you continue to celebrate an ancient freedom holiday? What aspects of this holiday touch you and make you treasure freedom?

Redeeming Captives

Because the experience of slavery in Egypt is imprinted in the Jewish mind, the Jewish obligation to redeem captives became binding. Maimonides, a great medieval rabbi and scholar, clarified this obligation.

He noted that “redemption of captives takes precedence over supporting the poor or clothing them, for there is no greater deed. For the problems of the captive include the problems of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and the one in mortal danger” (*Mishneh Torah*).

At Passover, Jews continue the redeeming process. Who now is in need of redemption? What can we do to free the contemporary captive?

Women: Shifrah and Puah

In Moses’ time the midwives Shifrah and Puah are credited with resisting Pharaoh’s demand that all Jewish male babies be put to death. These women risked their own lives to save the infants. In actuality, two seemingly powerless women gained control through active resistance.

This historical example of women empowering themselves serves as a model to all of us to resist immoral orders by superiors. We can also learn, as did these women, to trust in ourselves and act on our beliefs.

ACTIVITIES

1. In preparation for Passover, you can make various art projects for your seder table. Materials like ceramics, papier-mâché, clear plastic cups, and so on can be used as a base for making seder plates, Elijah’s cup, or other Kiddush cups.

For example, take an ordinary paper plate and paint it with tempura paints. After



it is dry, paint with white glue to hold the colors and protect against moisture. Design the five places for the ritual items. Let dry. Use as your seder plate.

2. Matzah covers can be made by decorating plain cloth napkins or handkerchiefs. Use embroidery, cross stitching, or block printing to include Passover symbols or spring scenes on the matzah covers.

3. Unique family traditions can be centered around this holiday. Some families take photos of the seder table and guests before the beginning of the seder each year. These photos create an ongoing family history. You can use this opportunity to collect Passover stories from your guests, creating your own oral history project each year.

4. Some folks may want to experience their ancestral wandering in the desert. Consider camping, moving from Egypt to the Red Sea, as part of your Passover experience. You might do a simple seder in the desert and note the difference you feel from a seder at home.

5. Transitions from slavery to freedom can happen in our own lives. Take time during Passover to consider where you may have been entrapped in the last year and how you can free yourself. Perhaps the family has not had enough time together due to hectic schedules. Consider how you can each “free” up additional time to spend together. Are there other things you are carrying around as excess baggage? Consider how a “spring cleaning” can free your soul.

6. For the urbanites among us, take a trip to the country during the Passover week—notice spring’s arrival and, for those in cold climates, experience the freedom of the warm weather.

7. Many songs are associated with the seder. Consider collecting a few musical tapes that will widen your musical repertoire for the holiday: Cindy Paley produced *A Singing Seder*, which is a helpful collection for seder preparation (write to her at: 14246 Chandler Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91401). Classic recordings to look for are sung by Theodore Bikel, Richard Tucker, and Jan Peerce.

If musicians are members of your circle, encourage them to accompany or even highlight part of the seder through music.

8. If you find the array of Haggaddahs not tailor made for you, make your own loose-leaf family Haggaddah. Although the structure of the seder remains the same, the readings, poetry, songs, and discussions change over the years. Duplicate enough for the seder and enjoy!

You can also make a child’s Haggaddah by folding several pieces of colored construction paper together. Punch holes in one side and tie ribbon to bind the booklet. Encourage children to imagine and re-create the various Haggaddah scenes, using felt pens, colored pencils, or crayons. Decorate the cover with a picture of “freedom.” And don’t forget to have the artist sign his/her work.

9. Today videos are available to help in the preparation for Pesach. A delightful and informative one is the *Animated Hagadah*, produced by Scopus Films, 150 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1102, New York, NY 10011, (212) 807-1020. Contact Jewish book stores and catalogues for more videos, as this is a growing field.

10. Books to supplement the Passover experience for children include: *But this Night Is Different: A Seder Experience* by A.F. Marcus and R. Zwerin (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1980); *The Mouse in the Matzah Factory* by Francine Medoff (Rockville, Maryland: Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1983).

11. Afikoman charity: It is traditional for the child who finds the hidden afikoman to “demand” a reward to return the afikoman before the seder may be completed. In other households, all children receive an afikoman prize. We like this innovation: The child who finds the afikoman chooses a charity that the adults will contribute to after Pesach. This is a wonderful way for children to truly feel involved in the Passover *mitzvah* of “feeding the poor.”

RECIPES

The cook’s survival course through Pesach includes the abbreviation KISS: Keep It Short and Simple. Don’t overdo—instant frozen foods are available. Consider some catering help if many people are attending the seder; fresh fruits and nuts make great desserts after the whole meal.



WHO SAYS MATZAH BALLS HAVE TO BE ROUND?

Passover can be a harrowing time for those who don't love to cook. The two of us often compare our memorable cooking disasters before each Passover.

Each year Phyllis makes at least two different attempts at matzah balls before they are edible. One year the matzah balls clouded the entire soup pot in one large mass. And her attempts at

egg white cookies—well, the less said, the better.

And Karen's Passover desserts have also been known to go flatter than flat and to taste like nothing. Not to mention the time she substituted red pepper for black in her matzah balls.

Let's face it, this holiday is not about cooking, even if it sometimes seems so. It's about freedom—even freedom from the kitchen.





Sample Menu Plans

SEDER #1:

Wines and Seder Ritual Foods
 Gefilte Fish with Horseradish
 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls
 Roasted Chicken or Roast Beef
 Potato Kugel
 Broccoli
 Fruits, Macaroons, and Nuts

SEDER #2:

Wines and Seder Ritual Foods
 Fresh Vegetable-Dill Soup with
 Matzah Balls
 Fresh Sole Wrapped Around Salmon
 Asparagus
 Roasted New Potatoes
 Fruits, Macaroons, and Nuts

SENTA'S GERMAN MATZAH BALLS (THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE HEAVY!)

4 matzahs

2 Tbsp. unsalted margarine

1 whole egg (or 2 egg whites)

¼ small onion, chopped fine

1-2 tsp. chopped parsley

1 cup matzah meal, add more if needed

⅛ tsp. pepper

¼ tsp. ginger

⅛ tsp. nutmeg

1 tsp. salt, to taste

Crumble the matzahs and soak in warm water. Drain water and squeeze mixture as dry as possible. Melt margarine in frying pan; add onions and fry until golden.

Add matzah mixture, stir for a few minutes until warmed. Remove from heat. Add in eggs, spices, parsley. Mix thoroughly and let stand in refrigerator for ½ hour.

Remove from refrigerator and shape mixture into balls (the size of a quarter); roll balls in a little matzah meal to hold the shape. Put on paper plates and store flat. May be frozen if done ahead.

Before cooking, test one matzah ball by putting in boiling water or soup. If it separates, roll each matzah ball in a dusting of additional matzah meal. Cook in soup until the matzah balls rise to the top. Recipe makes 6-8 matzah balls.

NOTE: For those who want lighter matzah balls, use the recipe on the box of matzah meal or the kosher for Passover mix.

CHAROSET—THE “MORTAR”—THREE KINDS

ASHKENAZIC STYLE:

4–5 peeled and cored apples, grated
1 cup chopped almonds, pecans, or

walnuts

2 tsp. cinnamon
4–6 Tbsp. sweet red wine

Peel and grate apples. Add nuts and wine to bind. Stir. Ready to serve 5–6 people.

ISRAELI STYLE:

1 peeled and cored apple
3 sliced bananas
½ cup pitted and chopped dates
½ cup almonds

juice and rind of one orange
juice and rind of one lemon
½ cup dry red wine
1 tsp. cinnamon

Stir together. Add more nuts or even matzah meal if too thin. This serves 10–12 people.

SEPHARDIC STYLE:

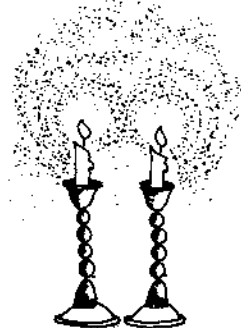
1 pound pitted and chopped dates
½ cup apricots
½ cup figs
4 peeled and chopped apples
½ cup sweet red wine

1 tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. cloves
¼ nutmeg
1 cup chopped pecans (optional: can be
made without nuts for those with
allergies)

Peel and chop apples. Simmer with dried fruit. Cook until the apples are tender and the mixture is almost like jam. Cool and add the nuts. Serves 15 people.



PESACH BLESSINGS



Introductory meditation to be recited together before candle lighting:

Today we gather to thank God for all the goodness in our lives, for the beauty of nature, for the love we feel for one another, for the Pesach tradition which we share. May our celebration increase our awareness of your ongoing gifts, O God.

Candle lighting:

(Recite this blessing, then light the candles on the first and last days. If it is Shabbat, light the candles first, then recite the blessing.)

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, asher keedshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadleek ner shel (Shabbat v') Yom Tov.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who enables us to welcome (Shabbat and) Pesach by kindling these lights.

Shehehayanu:

(On the first night of Pesach add:)

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, shehehayanu, v'keeyomanu v'higeeyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and encouraged us to celebrate this joyful festival.

Parents' blessing for their children:

(Place hands on children and recite.)

FOR BOYS:

May God touch you as you strive to live in the image of Ephraim and Menashe, leaders who carried on our traditions with pride.

FOR GIRLS:

May God touch you as you strive to live in the image of Sarah and Rebeccah, Rachel and Leah, leaders who carried on our traditions with pride.

CONTINUE SAYING FOR BOTH:

May the Eternal bless you and keep you.

May the Eternal bring you warmth and protect you.

May the Eternal embrace you and grant you peace. Amen.

Pesach Evening Kiddush to be used for the holiday nights and Shabbat:

(Raise wine cups and recite. Then drink wine.)

We praise God with this symbol of fullness, and give thanks for the opportunities we have to share life's blessings.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boray p'ree hagafen.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates fruit from the vine.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, asher bachar banu meekol ahm, v'romemanu meekol lashon, v'keedshanu b'meetzvotav. V'teetayn lanu, Adonai Elohaynu, b'ahavah (Shabbatot leemnucha oo) moadeem l'seemcha, chageem u'zmaneem l'sasson et yom (haShabbat hazeh v'et) yom hag hamatzot hazeh, z'man hayrutaynu, mikrah kodesh zaycher l'tzeeat meetzrayim. Kee banu bacharta v'otanu keedashta meekol ha-ahmeem, (v'Shabbat) oo'moaday kodshecha (b'ahavah oo'vratzon) b'seemcha oo'vsasson heenhaltanu). Baruch Ata Adonai, M'kadesh (ha-Shabbat v') Yisrael, v'hazmaneem. Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, shehehayanu v'keeyomanu v'higeeyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who has chosen us from among all people, sanctified us with holy acts, and given us times and seasons for rejoicing. (Shabbat and) Pesach remind us of the times for celebration, recalling the exodus from Egypt. You have distinguished us from all people, and have given us (the Shabbat and) holy festivals full of joy and inspiration. Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who sanctifies (the Shabbat,) the people Israel, and our sacred seasons.



Daytime Kiddush for holidays and Shabbat:

(Raise wine cups and recite. Then drink the wine.)

El Moaday Adonai Meekrah-ay kodesh, asher teekrehoo otam b'moadam. VayDaber Moshe et moaday Adonai el b'nay Yisrael.

These are the sacred times appointed by God; and you shall announce them in their season.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boray p'ree hagafen.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates the fruit from the vine.

Blessing over the matzah:

(Remove matzah cover and recite. Then give each person a piece of matzah.)

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, hamotzi lechem meen ha-aretz.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates matzah from the earth.