Hosting a Zoom Seder in 15 easy steps

1. **Principles**

* Stress free
* Interactive
* Spiritual
* Fun
* Engaging

1. **Goals**

* Transport your guests backwards to witness our people’s exodus, the distance we have come and the work we still have to do
* The Seder should prompt each of us to internalize the story – to go beyond empathy and imagine that we ourselves are experiencing this journey
* You don’t need to be a rabbi, only a teacher. Some of the mitzvot required are biblically required and others were instituted by our rabbis.
  + The biblically required mitzvot are simply to tell the story and to eat matzah.
  + The mitzvot added by our rabbis are to drink wine, eat maror (bitter herbs) and sing songs. All of which can be done virtually. Everything else is about connection and creation: connecting us to each other and creating new insights that can enrich our life.
  + Give yourself permission to be creative and mix things up.
* Egypt is not a place that we leave once, it is a place we perpetually leave.

1. **Leap of Faith**

* Virtual Seders are permitted and good for your health
* Invite family/friends – cast a wide net, the impacts of social isolation are real
* Pick a date/time – schedule the Seder in advance - send email reminders and have RSVPs
* Set a time period – keep it short
* Prepare! Create your own Haggadah, use multiple Haggadot – be creative, make it personal

1. **Ground Rules**

* Leverage chat functionality
* Minimize side conversations
* Mute yourself when you are not speaking
* Its ok to take bio breaks, just remember to be on mute!
* Bring a pen and piece of paper for alternative forms of communication
* sing together – even off key
* Bring something fun, a costume, an animal, a fun background
* You are going on a long journey, beverage and snacks are okay

1. **Understand the Technology tools available**

* Zoom, FB, Webex, Google Hangouts (find the student in your group of friends or family who has the free account!)
* Trial run
* Provide a guide before hand – camera function and mute button
* Many advanced functions – breakout tools

1. **Put in the work before the seder**

* Why is this night different from all other nights – this year your Seder will be different. Embrace that difference; don’t try to re-create what you had before
* What becomes possible with this type of a Seder – potluck by mail! Preparing meals together virtually
* Collaborative Haggadah
* What are the rituals that are most important to you during the Seder – focus on these!
* Tzedakah

There is a Passover custom that dates back almost 2,000 years. Prior to (or at the start of) the holiday, tzedakah is given to provide for those who are in need. Why? It is to remind us that when the Seder has ended, we cannot return to how it has been “on all other nights.” Rather, with our tzedakah and through our action, we commit to bring the lessons of this Seder into our actions tomorrow, the next day, and every day to come.

1. **Assign Homework (a poem, part of the story, a song, answers to a question)**

Mitzrayim in Hebrew stems from the root “tzar,” which means constrained or tight spot. As we think about the “tight spot” we are in today, what learnings can we apply from our Exodus journey and the ancient writings to make our current Mitzrayim more manageable?

The Passover Seder recognizes the importance of asking questions, whether or not you are wise (the story of the Four Children), or actually get answers (there are no direct answers to the Four Questions). The Talmud indicates that those at the Seder should ask any questions that stimulates discussion and allows us to act as free people. As important, the Hagaddah teaches us to question authority. Clearly Moses challenged Pharaoh. The ultimate example of challenging authority is when Moses questions God on whether he is the right person to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. It may have been this very challenge that made God recognize Moses was fit to lead: questioning is a true sign of humility as we admit what we don’t know or understand.

Lesson learned: Leaders who show humility are more effective than those that don’t. It is also critical that we ask questions, even to those in authority and even when we may not know enough to ask the “right” question. We also should not become paralyzed if we don’t have perfect information; we must put as a premium taking-action. The Israelites decided to leave with the Egyptian army in pursuit. Nachschon, who could not swim, saw what was happening and walked into the Red Sea. When the water rose above his mouth, Moses is said to have prayed to God God responds, Moses, your friend is drowning and you are praying. Moses follows Nachschon

1. **Delegate Roles** 
   * Designate an e-Moses, create a seating chart
   * Assign a music director
2. **Create a virtual Seder plate**
3. **Passover Cookbook**
   * Share a recipe and all make the same item
4. **Amazon Moses Basket**
   * Send a Passover treat to all of your guests
5. **Elijah’s Cup Pre-Seder Group Study**
   * Time of coming together
6. **Hide the Afikomen prior to the meal –** 
   * Where in the world is the Afikomen located?

* There is no proof that the place where the Afikomen is hidden actually existed, but its dimensions are clear.
* The Afikomen this year is hidden is a place that is found in the book of Genesis, although it can also be found in the Koran/Quran
* The Afikomen this year is hidden in a place that is connected to the University of Minnesota
* You may want to get help from a dove to find where the Afikomen this year is hidden
* The Afikomen this year is hidden in a place where there may have been up to 35,000 others, but most did not come alone.
* If you want to go during the summer to a replica of where the Afikomen is hidden, you will have to travel 222 miles from Minneapolis and pay $35.
* Passover Riddle
  + This person or Passover symbol is found in the Hagaddah and the Passover story

1. **During the Seder**

* Show appreciation – what are the things that you are grateful your life
  + Make a Dayeinu moment with paper, see how many people match
    - In one word what is your favorite part of the Seder!
* Light the candles –the oldest, the farthest away, the person who has had the most journeys this year.
* Blessing of the children – virtual hugs
* Ground Yourselves with a physical act on line
* Washing hands: As we place renewed focus on this simple act, the following kavanah – intention – can become a moment of mindfulness and gratitude.Before washing hands or sanitizing, take a moment to pause and recognize what you’re doing: you’re about to clean your hands. Whisper to yourself:

Thank you for water and soap and sanitizer.

Thank you for hands.

Thank you for everyone who made it possible for me to be clean right now – the people who made soap and sanitizer and sinks and towels and plumbing and this space and facilities and for the human project of medicine and health and hygiene.

Thank you for my health and the ability to care for others in this moment.

As you clean your hands, look at them. Feel your hands, see your skin, your nails. Take this moment to pause and breathe. Feel what cleansing feels like right now.

* Karpas : The first time we eat during the seder (and our first truly Passover-like ritual) is the dipping of greens into saltwater. Saltwater is a significant part of our story, a reminder of the tears shed during slavery and for enslaved people. But dipping the greens – the first shoots of spring, which always return, whether we witness their budding or not – are signs of hope amid dark times. Hope emerges, even while damp with tears.
* *Karpas* symbolizes hope for the future. Jewish tradition always embraces hope, even during uncertain times. What are you hopeful about? What signs of spring are you noticing today, wherever you live?
* Participation is the key!
  + Assign different attendees a different part of the Seder to lead – encourage them to get creative with their role
* Singing challenges and other fun games to engage your guests

1. **Concluding the Virtual Seder**

* Recommend ending Zoom Seder before dinner; start again after dinner OR….sing first and then end.
* Leverage the 15 steps of the Seder to connect what happened to what is happening – locate yourself within the story!
  + In Jewish tradition, every action is an opportunity for mindfulness and gratitude
    - Scarcity and Abundance – how are these connected, how do we think about these words, how do we act in either situation

Celebrate Freedom…next year in Person!