Tips to avoid a boring Seder

The night of the Seder is different from all other nights—not just because we eat Matsa and bitter herbs, but mainly because on this night, we educate ourselves and our sons and daughters about our history: how the children of Israel came to Egypt, thrived, were enslaved by Pharaoh, and were ultimately rescued by our God.

The Seder night is dedicated to all the guests, family, and friends who partake in the Seder with us, particularly our children. “Seder” means “order,” which refers to the program of 15 steps established for this special night. But it’s not enough to have a script; you also need an MC to run the Seder, keep the children awake, and prevent the adults from getting bored. The person leading the Seder should take their role seriously and feel responsible for the success of this event.

At the Seder, we fulfill one of the most important and beautiful Mitsvot of the entire Tora: *Sippur Yetsi’at Mitsrayim*, recounting the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

I will now give five brief tips about what the MC must do to make the Seder as successful as possible.

1. DIVIDE AND CONQUER

It’s essential to divide and assign the texts of the Haggada among the participants—who will read what part, and whether they will read it in Hebrew or English. Everyone participating is expected to read a paragraph, so the MC should communicate to the guests which parts they are responsible for, so they can prepare to read them well.

Young people and adults can participate by sharing explanations and comments about the symbols and foods of the Seder. For example: What is Matsa? What is the process to make Matsa? Why do we eat Matsa? Or why do we eat *charoset*, drink

four cups on this night, or eat reclining on our left side? It would be great if the MC sent all participants the subjects they are to explain, along with links to ensure that their explanations are informative rather than opinion-based.

Here are some helpful links:

- **WHY CHAROSET?**
- **WHY MATSA?**
- **WHY FOUR CUPS?**
- **WHY DO WE EAT RECLINING ON OUR LEFT SIDE?**

The MC should also tell the "speakers" to limit their time to no more than two or three minutes—especially if these explanations are presented before dinner.

2. BE RELEVANT!

On that note, the MC should save deeper or potentially debatable subjects for after dinner.

Presenting a subject and then briefly discussing it makes the Seder more exciting and participatory. Let me share some ideas about slavery, for example, that can be discussed and compared with contemporary situations or events:

DEMONIZATION OF JEWS

One of the biblical paragraphs most highlighted in the Haggada is from Parashat Ki Tabo (Deuteronomy 26:6). It says that the Egyptians "demonized" us (*vayare'u otanu*) as part of their effort to turn public opinion against the Jews, portraying them as enemies of the nation and justifying their enslavement.

Question: In our days, are Jews, the State of Israel, or the Israel Defense Forces still being demonized? Are lies spread or used against Israel or its army to harm its image?

CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

Slavery began with a change of government in Egypt. According

to some commentaries, it was not just a new king but a different dynasty, one that hated the previous regime—which had been friendly to the Jews—and sought to cancel the Jewish people.
Question: Does a change in government—especially when a new political party comes to power—still affect Israel and the Jews today, in 2024? For instance, consider Brazil and Argentina and their relationship with Israel over the last two years.

SLAVERY
Is forced labor the only form of slavery you know? Does "mental slavery" exist in modern times—for example, when certain ideas or values are promoted or suppressed by media or governments to serve political agendas?
Question: Is it easier or harder to think freely for ourselves today than it was 50 years ago?

3. CHILDREN

All I've mentioned so far applies more to adults or teenagers. It is important that the adults are motivated to participate, learn, and engage in discussions. But we must also consider the children—"the main protagonists of this night." The MC should ask parents to help their children prepare readings, explanations, or words of Tora they learned in school.

It would also be extremely nice to encourage the children to show and explain the drawings and art pieces they created at school to all the participants. Again, the more we prepare in advance, the better the results.

Children should also be encouraged to sing the primary songs of the Seder and, if possible, prepare a short play about the encounters between Pharaoh, Moshe, Aharon, the Ten Plagues, etc.