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A Different Night, The Family Participation Haggadah



Synopsis

This is the haggadah that has changed the American seder. First published in 1997, it's a full traditional seder, but with large amounts of art and commentaries, and discussion starters -- all in a user-friendly format that makes it easy to customize your seder. The Four Children section (with 20 representations going back to 1526) is already a classic. Easy-to-follow instructions make this book accessible to even a novice seder leader; and the many short commentaries will enrich anyone's Passover. Now in a new edition, with an added 32 pages of Passover stories.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

New Haggadah Earmarked for Families BY NOW THERE are who-knows-how-many different editions of the Haggadah. It is probably the most published book in all of Jewish life. There are haggadot for vegetarians, peaceniks, secularists, art lovers and almost every category you can think of. So what do we need another one for? That was my thought until I opened this one, and then I understood which niche this book fills. It is for those who may not know much, but who want to learn and who want a seder that is user-friendly and interactive and meaningful for both adults and children. That is a pretty big segment of the market, and so this is a book that deserves to be considered for possible use for at least one, if not both, of the nights of the seder. The people who put it together are not only good pedagogues, they are master designers. And so they have worked out a number of formats and prompts on each page that make it clear and easy to use. For those who don't want to or are unable to stay up till midnight, there is a bare bones seder that consists of both text and ideas for discussion and projects for the kids and that can be completed in an hour.

There are thought questions, such as Was it right for Abraham to break his father's idols? and Are we not all Jews by choice today? that are bound to raise debate at the seder. And there are quotations from a whole range of people such as Frances Bacon, William Shakespeare and Winston Churchill as well as Maimonides and Rav and Chassidic masters. Shakespeare's thoughts about whether revenge is good or bad are a lovely sendoff to the discussion of why we spill ten drops of wine for the ten plagues. The whole idea of the seder is that it should be an experiment in intergenerational communication. And so the editors do something very special with the section about the four children. They bring us 15 pages of different drawings, so that we can discuss together what constituted wisdom and what constituted badness, and what constituted simpleness and inability to ask in different periods and in the imagination of different artists. They show us a rendition from the Prague Haggadah (1526) and, next to it, one from Budapest (1924). And they suggest we might do some role playing or debate whether the wicked child may be an unfair description. They show us Abrabanel's opinion that the wise child may really be a smart ass, wise guy trying to show off his knowledge instead of the good guy that we have always thought him to be. There are renditions of the four children that show the wicked son smoking at the seder (1879) or as a prize fighter (1920). Tanya Zion adds two marvelous sets: one of the four versions of the ideal Jewish girl and one of the four children in contemporary Israel. See if you can figure out why the haredi child is the one who does not know how to ask. A set by Dick Codor uses the Marx brothers as models (quick do you remember which one never spoke?) I bet you can't get through this section of the seder without many laughs and a lively interchange on what constitutes goodness or wisdom or rebelliousness or apathy in our age. But try to save some time for the rest of the Haggadah, for there are a lot of innovations and surprises all through this book. By the way, one of its best suggestions is to expand the meaning of the karpas that we eat at the beginning of the seder to include dipping and tasting various fresh vegetables and other appetizers so that When do we eat already? does not become the kvetch of the evening. The seder is not supposed to be an endurance contest or a speed race or a rushed-through prelude to the meal. It is supposed to be a holy moment, when parents teach children who we are and what our story is and manufacture the memories that will nourish them for years to come. --Rabbi Jack Riener, Jewish Journal SouthGood to the Last Cup Did Maxwell House kill the American Passover Seder? It seems like a heavy charge to pin on a coffee company. But who knows how many Jewish children, numbly and obediently flipping through the pages of the blue and white Maxwell House came to regard the seder as a stultifying arcane ritual, a regimented recitation of thees and thous, an endurance test as lacking in levity as leaven? Is it only a coincidence that in the 70 years since Maxwell House began

distributing tens of thousands of haggadot as promotional items, the intermarriage rate among Jews has soared? The rabbis never intended that the Exodus From Egypt be recited rote out of a paperback book. And Noam Zion and David Dishon don't intend that either. They have written a Passover haggadah for families eager to dispense with set questions and answers but intimidated by the prospect as well. Careful to retain the traditional core of the haggadah the 15 steps beginning with the first cup of wine and kiddush and concluding with the hallel, nirtza prayer and folk songs they weave around the text a tapestry of ancient midrash, contemporary commentary, provocative questions, and unexpected answers. They involve the children, with skits, games, and gentle horseplay. Some are silly like the Afghani Jewish custom of striking your neighbor with a stalk of green onion during the chanting of Dayenu. Others encourage introspection, like asking children to name the one object they would carry with them out of Egypt. At the same time, adults are urged to consider the mature themes of what Zion and Dishon call a leap of solidarity back into the founding event of Jewish nationhood. The heart of this effort is the section they call maggid or storytelling. The section takes the form of six suggested symposia on timeless themes: assimilation, anti-Semitism, ancient Egyptian oppression, resistance to tyranny, sexual oppression and the lessons of suffering. The sources brought to bear are as varied as Reb Nachman of Bralslav, and Abraham Lincoln, Zora Neale Hurston and Victor Frankl. Because the authors are superb Jewish educators and scholars on the staff of Jerusalem's Shalom Hartman Institute (founded by Orthodox philosopher Rabbi David Hartman to create a common language among the most and least traditional Jews), their Haggadah avoids the easy relevance that has reduced recent haggadot to public service announcements on nuclear war or women's rights. When the authors urge a discussion, they offer appropriate texts on Jewish tradition, contradictory views, that invites the opinions of guests across the range of religious, ideological and generational perspectives. A few warnings for those who undertake to host a post-Maxwell House seder. As the authors point out, their haggadah contains enough material for a few years of seders and some preparation is advised to select themes, pull out readings, and assign roles. The other risk is that a long session of discussion and storytelling, however stimulating, can't compete with the smells emanating from the kitchen. Zion and Dishon suggest you revive the original rabbinic custom (forbidden by some, although not all, sport halachic authorities): Along with the vegetable that is dipped into saltwater near the beginning of the seder, offer substantive appetizers with dips of their own. And if intelligent conversation, imaginative role-playing, and probing questions aren't enough to keep some guests awake? There's always coffee. --Andres Silow-Carroll, Moment Magazine

Noam Sachs Zion and David Dishon, educated in ivy league schools in the U.S., made aliyah to Israel in 1973 during the Yom Kippur War. They are on the Judaica faculty of the Shalom Hartman Institute for advanced Jewish studies in Jerusalem. Noam runs the curriculum development department specializing in Bible, midrash and art. He also contributed to the Bill Moyers book entitled Talking about Genesis (Doubleday) issued in conjunction with the Moyers Genesis series. David Dishon is the Judaic studies coordinator at the experimental Hartman high school, author of The Pluralistic Culture Of Rabbinic Debate (Schocken, Hebrew) and currently writing on rabbinic views of warfare.

Honestly...I just picked this up and was too overwhelmed to give it the attention it probably deserves. When I flipped through it, what I saw looked interesting...but the sheer volume of information just turned me off too much. I didn't feel intrigued or drawn in...I'd read a section or two and then feel like I had to turn more pages.

It would be too easy to state what Noam Zion and David Dishon have done, or potentially done, the content and variety available for one Seder. This particular Haggadah is crammed with all sorts of information and stimulus. That is both a compliment and a criticism. Unfortunately, while it is jam-packed with lots of good things, the amount of information can be distracting or, worse, a turn off. Additionally, while everything is organized along the lines of the traditional Seder, it's not always easy to find some of the extraneous information. Additionally, the large number of inserts can frustrate or just plain annoy a reader. Nevertheless, there are many positive things to say about this Haggadah. First, the variety of information probably means you will never have to buy another Haggadah again, or at least not another leader's assistant. There are enough activities to be fresh every year. Second, the text and Hebrew transliterations are fluid and easy to read. The two authors have gone all out to produce this Haggadah, and it shows in the quality of the work and the price of the volume. That in mind, you may want to buy one copy to serve as an idea catalyst and a less expensive Haggadah for general use. It is well worth the price to buy one and those with larger budgets will benefit from additional copies.

The best haggadah I've used. Many opportunities for participation and discussion.

I think of this book as a great seder-planning resource but not one to pass out and use at the seder. The book's size and format are awkward. Some of the fonts and drawings (all black and white) are

small and/or pale. If used in its entirety, this would create a long seder. The good points are that the language is gender-neutral, the readings and activity suggestions are engaging for a variety of ages and family configurations, and there is plenty of traditional Hebrew with transliteration to make it seem like a "real" seder. I would not recommend the Leader's guide. The additional expense isn't worth the price, and there are plenty of free online resources if you feel that the Different Night Haggadah isn't helpful enough. It's pretty self-explanatory though.

Excellent haggadah. Truly something for everyone. Fascinating commentary. Modern language.

This will give many ideas and resources for conducting a creative and interesting seder. There is also a compact edition that is reasonably priced and is available on the authors' website.

I purchased "A Different Night" because my set of "Children's Haggadah"s were ruined and my children had grown enough to appreciate a more advanced seder. I skimmed through the Haggadah in the week before Pesach to get a feel for this seder (which I definitely suggest). It is crammed full of lots of interesting readings, side bars, pictures and discussions. It has a symbol next to the "must do" sections. On the opposite page (and sometimes the next few pages) are readings, digressions, stories, further prayers, and pictures or cartoons. You can just do the "must do" sections for a 1 hour seder, or throw in a reading or two between these to add more interest. In this way, you could have a different seder every year and never get bored! One thing we discussed a lot were the pictures, especially the 20 or so fine art depictions of the Four Sons. It has transliteration and translation for most of the Hebrew. Only 2 criticisms - (1) There was not a "reading" of the story of the Exodus. The Haggadah expects you to tell it from memory? or use the 60 second "play" for the kids to tell the story like an interview. (2) There were many pages between the Four questions and the answers to the questions. And the answers were hardly the traditional answers. I think they missed the boat on that one. Overall very enjoyable modernized Haggadah with lots of options.

Look like a great Haggadah...I'll see to, orrow night!

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