

Discussion Topics for Passover

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Source: Rabbi Mark Dov Shapiro

Somewhere during the course of your Passover seder this year, ask one of these questions and see how your fellow attendees respond. You can also try typing the questions on small pieces of paper, folding them up, and asking everyone around the table to choose one, read it aloud, and respond. Depending on your audience, the responses may be either serious or playful. Either way, you're guaranteed interesting discussion.

- What do Passover and Easter have in common? (Think spring festivals, eggs, and redemption, to start.) How do they differ?
- Think for a moment about the future of the Jewish community. Do you think your great-grandchildren will be sitting at a Passover seder someday? Why or why not?
- Which symbol on the seder plate do you think is the most important?
- What if "Bitter Herb" is your brother-in-law or a family friend? How should such an individual be treated at the seder?
- It is traditional for the youngest person at a seder to ask the Four Questions. If you were to create a new tradition for the asking of the Four Questions, who would you choose to ask the questions and why?
- Tradition says that Elijah the Prophet is supposed to announce the coming of the Messiah. If you could send Elijah to any spot on the globe to make the announcement of the Messiah, where would you send him?
- Some people say the Ten Plagues are part of tradition and so they should be included in the seder. Others say the plagues lead us to inappropriately exalt in the adversities suffered by the Egyptians. Others say that Jews take a drop of wine from the cup for each plague, acknowledging that freedom was won at a cost. Do you believe in a God who punishes people? Would God slay the Egyptians' firstborn sons? What do you think? Should the Ten Plagues be part of the seder?
- Do you believe we can eventually eradicate wars, poverty, and starvation? Or do you believe that we will always be stuck in some version of the current mess? How would you suggest we spread a more hopeful message and deal with the cynicism and self-doubt that always accompanies us when we start talking about changing the world?
- What experiences in your life have given you hope? Tell about some struggle to change something that worked. What did you learn from it?