10 Things You Might Not Know about the Seder

1. The Seder is meant to be a discussion, and it is designed to promote questions. Think about how different the beginning of the Seder is from a typical Shabbat or holiday meal: we eat *Karpas* before saying *Motzi*, we lift up the plate with all of the food on it and then put it down again, we break one of <u>three</u> *matzahs*, we pour a second cup of wine (or grape juice) before we say *motzi*. All of these differences are meant to promote questions. In fact, the *Mah Nishtana* might have originally been said by the Seder leader ("How different this night is") to get people to ask questions before beginning the telling of the Exodus from Egypt.

2. Eating *Karpas* has become an opportunity to eat greens dipped in salt water in many places. However, there are different customs including dipping potatoes. In fact, one does not even need to dip a vegetable; anything that takes the *berachah* (blessing) of *borei p'ri ha'adamah* can be dipped into anything. Try dipping strawberries into chocolate. Not only will you get people asking questions (see #1 above) but you will also enjoy a delicious treat.

3. There is no prohibition against eating between the *Karpas* and the *matzah*. Some people even encourage eating foods that take the *berachah* of *borei p'ri ha'adamah* throughout the *Maggid* section so that participants don't get too hungry and cranky. Just don't spoil your appetite for the *matzah* and everything that comes afterwards.

4. There are four different accounts of the Passover story in the Maggid section. עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ (*Avadim Hayinu*, We were slaves), מִתְּחִילָה עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה הָיוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ (*Mitechilah ovdei avodah zarah hayu avoteinu,* Our ancestors were idol worshippers), אֲרַמִי אֹבֵד אָבִי (*Arami oved avi*, My father was a wandering Aramean), and פֶּסַח, מַצָּה, מָרוֹר (*Pesaḥ, Matzah, Maror*). Each version addresses a different aspect of what it means to be enslaved and to become free.

5. Each of the questions asked by the Four Children is found in the Torah. Each of the given answers is also in the Torah. However, the answers that go with the questions in the Torah go with different questions in the Haggadah.

6. Although it has become of symbol of sweetness and the bricks of slavery at the same time, *ḥaroset* actually might have originally been a way to eat *maror* safely. Some early sources mention that one needs to dip the *maror* into the *ḥaroset* before eating the *maror* in order to kill any bugs that might be on the *maror*.

7. *Matzah* has not always been a large, flat, square cracker. It actually used to be soft like pita. Even today, some people, such as the Yemenite community, continue to make soft *matzah* that they eat on Passover. In fact, some people call soft *matzah*, "Yemenite *matzah*."

8. Hillel's Sandwich was actually Hillel's way of eating all of the prescribed Passover foods at once. At the time that the *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple) stood in Jerusalem, people would offer a lamb at the *Beit Hamikdash* and eat it as part of their Passover celebration. Thus, Hillel would eat the *Pesah* lamb, *Matzah*, and *Maror* in one sandwich. (Remember that this is different than the *Maror* section of the Seder, during which one eats only the *maror* and the *haroset*.)

9. On a similar note, during the *Pesah, Matzah, Maror* section of the Seder, many people point at the *matzah* and the *maror* that are on the Seder plate; however, the shank bone (or other roasted food) is left out of the pointing. The shank bone is left out because it is not an actual paschal lamb but simply a reminder of the Passover offering that was made in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

10. What is *afikoman*? The word comes from Greek, but there is great debate about what exactly the word means. Whatever it means, everyone agrees that playing Hide-and-Seek with the last food eaten at the Seder is a great way to keep kids interested in the Seder.