

# SHARING HOLIDAYS

## SHARING A PASSOVER SEDER

### PURPOSE

Share in the ritual of a Passover Seder that commemorates the misery of slavery and the universal struggle for liberation. Sing, engage, and discover the similarities in the ancestral heritage of Jews and Muslims, while sharing a traditional meal.

### PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

Provide a shared experience of the Passover Seder among the members of chapter

### PROCESS

#### Welcome by co-leaders and host

*NOTE: Traditionally Jews don't taste matzah a month prior the start of Passover—discuss this with the members of your chapter—if this is an issue it can be accommodated*

#### Welcome

Introduction, sharing of good and welfare, purpose is to discuss, share, and celebrate the holiday of Passover

- Explain the history of the holiday of Passover and describe the process of the Seder that will take place
- Describe the symbols that will be discussed and the variation in Passover customs and traditions by household

#### History

After many decades of slavery to the Egyptian pharaohs, during which time the Israelites were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors, G-d saw the people's distress and sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message: "Send forth My people, so that they may serve Me." But despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed G-d's command. G-d then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues, afflicting them and destroying everything from their livestock to their crops. At the stroke of midnight of 15 Nissan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), G-d visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, killing all their firstborn. While doing so, G-d spared the Children of Israel, "passing over" their homes—hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh's resistance was broken, and he virtually chased his former slaves out of the land. The Israelites left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have time to rise. Six hundred thousand adult males, plus many more women and children, left Egypt on that day, and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their birth as G-d's chosen people.

## HOW TO HOST A PASSOVER SEDER

- Send out an **invitation** to the women in your chapter including the time, place, and any other logistical details you may want the women to know. Plan for this meeting to take place in the evening during the spring months (*ideally in the Hebrew month of Nissan*). This meeting will last about three hours, this includes the full meal if you should decide to do it, the reading of the Haggadah prior to the meal and after. It is customary to have a full meal; however, you may also just have select traditional foods.
- In preparing for the Passover Seder, you will **select a Haggadah** that reflects your values that will also match the theme of your Passover Seder. [Shalom Center](#) is a great resource that has an interfaith Seder Haggadah titled *Freedom Seder for the Earth*. Other options include *A Modern, Interfaith Family Passover Haggadah Written by Nancy Cronk*.
- Some different **themes** that are timely include: oppression, refugees, feeling like the other & stranger, gratitude, hope, grit.
- Planning the **menu** for your Passover Seder will be important. You will find recipes and suggestions on page five of *A Modern, Interfaith Family Passover Haggadah Written by Nancy Cronk* or in any Jewish, Kosher, or online cookbooks under “Passover recipes.” You may ask your guests to bring desserts and side dishes. Remember to be mindful of the dietary restrictions of all of your guests! Absolutely no wine!
- You may consider ahead of time suggesting that **everyone take part** in the reading throughout the Passover Seder to ensure that everyone at the table is as engaged as possible. If someone doesn’t feel comfortable doing something, they may pass on it. This is perfect for sections when reading the [Ten Plagues](#) and [Four Questions](#). Definitely leave ample time for explaining and questions.
- In **setting the table** for your Passover Seder you can refer to page seven of *A Modern, Interfaith Family Passover Haggadah Written by Nancy Cronk* to help guide you.  
**Remember** to encourage as much dialogue as possible to trigger the participants to ask questions and to relate the Seder to their own daily lives and experiences. Some potential questions to invite dialogue include:
  - *When dipping the Karpas into salt water:* Has anything ever happened to you which seemed bitter at the time but later turned out to be sweet?
  - *When breaking the middle matzah and hiding it for later:* What is a “hidden” aspiration that you have, i.e. something that you have postponed for later in life but you plan/aspire to one day get to?
  - *When speaking about the harsh slavery:* In our day-to-day lives, do we really love what we do or are we more like slaves to our work?
  - The word *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) resembles the Hebrew word for constriction. What is your personal *Mitzrayim*? What is holding you back the most?
  - *When speaking about the plagues:* Are there signs in our life pushing us to change that we are just refusing to see?

- Pharaoh Vs. Moses: What are the ingredients to be a great leader?
- *When speaking about jumping in the Red Sea:* What have you done recently to step out of your comfort zone?
- *When singing Dayneu:* What are the gifts in our life that make it all worth it?
- *When reciting Hallel:* If you could fully express gratitude to someone in your past who really made a difference in your life, who would it be?
- *When eating matzah:* If you could eradicate laziness from your life and live with complete discipline, what could you accomplish?

## **SHARING IN RAMADAN AND AN IFTAR**

### **PURPOSE**

Share in an iftar, the meal to break the fast during Ramadan

### **PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES**

Provide a shared experience of an iftar among the members of chapter

### **PROCESS**

#### **Welcome and breaking of the fast**

Prepare small starter dishes to begin the meal. Iftar meals often are divided into two parts. Immediately after sunset, many communities break their fasts with a small amount of food. Dates are a common food for breaking the fast; tradition holds that this is how the Prophet broke his fast during Ramadan. It is fun to serve several different date dishes. You can find recipes great recipes online. Nonalcoholic drinks such as milk, water or mango or other fruit juice often accompany this part of the meal. After this, the group performs the evening prayer before the main meal itself.

#### **Place for Prayer**

When you are hosting your party ensure that there is space for prayer The place should be laid out with the prayer mats or clean flat sheets in the direction of the khiblah. Qiblah or Kiblah is the direction that should be faced when a muslim prays. The Qiblah, for any point of reference on the Earth, is the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca. Many have a compass that can help you identify the correct location to face during prayer. There are many sites that you can find on google such as: <http://www.central-mosque.com/index.php/Acts-of-Worship/qiblah-direction-basics.html> Have extra scarves and shawls available for women to wear when reading their prayers.

#### **Main Meal**

Decorate your table so that it is festive. Many The Iftar is generally a large communal event so ensure that your Iftar dishes should be large enough for all the guests. Add a Ramadan Lantern to the table setting as a centerpiece. You can find decorative lanterns at most stores.

#### **After the Meal**

After the meal is finished, families or friends often spend time together relaxing, drinking tea and talking. This is an important period of bonding in the wake of the Ramadan fast. Many Muslims perform Tarawih, or night prayers, during Ramadan, and the approach of these prayers can be a signal for the end of the Iftar. In some cases, the family and guests may perform these prayers together.

## **MEETING THEME FOR AN IFTAR (ALSO APPROPRIATE DURING YOM KIPPUR): FASTING AS A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE**

### **PURPOSE**

Increase the awareness of fasting as a spiritual experience in our life. This is designed to be used prior to or during Ramadan. It can also be revised to be used prior to Jewish fasting days

### **PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES**

To understand how each of us observes fasting To expose participants to the different approaches to fasting and how to take it from a burdensome experience to a spiritual one To demonstrate how a change in mindset can occur after sharing each other's narratives

### **PROCESS**

**Welcome by co-leaders and host** Welcome /Introduction, sharing of good and welfare, purpose is to discuss the significance of fasting in our life

- Explain that the holiday of Ramadan is approaching and provide an understanding of Ramadan
- Describe the requirements of fasting during Ramadan and what is allowed versus prohibited

### **DIALOGUE**

- Why fast? What is the wisdom of fasting?
- What are the benefits? How can we use the fasting experience to better connect us to God?
- What have you done to make fasting a spiritual experience?
- How do you prepare yourself for fasting physically? Spiritually?
- What self restraint discipline does each of our religions teach us by decreeing the importance of fasting?
- What does the concept of fasting for penance help us to understand? Does this have relevance to you in your life?

## SHARING IN SUKKOT

### PURPOSE

Share in the holiday of Sukkot and experience being in a Sukkah, a temporary dwelling that is built during the holiday. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Agriculturally, Sukkot is a harvest festival and is sometimes referred to as Chag Ha-Asif, the Festival of Ingathering. Together the chapter will sing, engage, and discover the similarities in the ancestral heritage of Jews and Muslims, while spending time in a Sukkah.

### PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

Provide a shared experience of the holiday of Sukkot among the members of chapter

### PROCESS

**Welcome by co-leaders and host** Introduction, sharing of good and welfare, purpose is to discuss, share, and celebrate the holiday of Sukkot

- Explain the history of the holiday of Sukkot and discuss the significance of Sukkot as the only holiday that is a full body experience
- Describe the symbolism and themes of the holiday of Sukkot

### History

Sukkot, a Hebrew word meaning "booths" or "huts," refers to the Jewish festival of giving thanks for the fall harvest. It also commemorates the 40 years of Jewish wandering in the desert after the giving of the Torah atop Mt. Sinai. Sukkot is celebrated five days after Yom Kippur on the 15th of the month of Hebrew month of Tishrei, and is marked by several distinct traditions. One, which takes the commandment to dwell in booths literally, is to erect a sukkah, a small, temporary booth or hut. Sukkot (in this case, the plural of sukkah) are commonly used during the seven-day festival for eating, entertaining and even for sleeping. Sukkot also called Z'man Simchateinu (Season of Our Rejoicing), is the only festival associated with an explicit commandment to rejoice. A final name for Sukkot is Chag HaAsif, (Festival of the Ingathering), representing a time to give thanks for the bounty of the earth during the fall harvest.

### HOW TO HOST GUESTS IN YOUR SUKKAH

- Send an **invitation** to the guests. Share with them that you are inviting them to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot.
- **Build** your Sukkah
- Obtain the **'Four Species'** *NOTE: If you are unable to obtain these items you are still able to have guests over to celebrate Sukkot. This is not a requirement, simply a holiday tradition.*

- Etrog: a citron
- Lulav: the frond of a date palm tree
- Hadas: myrtle boughs
- Aravah: branches from a willow tree \*\*To understand the symbolism of the ‘Four Species’ you can read more [here](#).
- Decide on an **arts and crafts activity** that you and your guests can do together during this time to add to the decor of your Sukkah. You can find an abundance of ideas online.
- Create a **handout** of the blessings that are said in the Sukkah
  - **Shehecheyanu (the first time you wave the lulav):** *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu laz'man hazeh.*
  - Our praise to You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of all: for giving us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this season.
  - **Blessing for Dwelling in the Sukkah:** *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu leishev basukkah.*
  - Our praise to You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of all: You hallow us with Your mitzvot and command us to dwell in the sukkah.
  - **Blessing for the Lulav:** *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat lulav.*
  - Our praise to You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of all: whose mitzvot teaches us holiness and who instructs us to take up the lulav.

## FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Sukkot offers a moment to think of a timely issue: refugees and the temporary status of their lives. What are you doing to erect a permanent roof over the heads of refugees? What else can you be doing?
- Sukkot is the only Jewish holiday that is a full body experience given that we build the Sukkah, we eat in the Sukkah, we brave elements in the Sukkah, we are even encouraged to sleep in the Sukkah. What is the significance of a full-bodied experience?
- The Sukkah is a temporary structure that reminds us of our homelessness. Did you ever have a time in your life when you felt like you were living in a temporary state? How did you deal with this? Did you find refuge in a particular structure or community?
- Sukkot reminds us of how fragile are our lives . When do you feel most fragile?
- The holiday of Sukkot was the foundation for the pilgrims creating Thanksgiving. Why do you think that the pilgrims picked Sukkot as the model for Thanksgiving?