

# Shlom Bayyit

*Shaom Bayyit (A Welcoming Home) is a column contributed by our Ritual Committee. We hope to share the joys of Judaism with our TBR Community and encourage everyone to bring a bit more of our rich tradition into their lives.*



## Passovers Past: What Are Your Memories?

This question is not the one asked by the youngest child at the Seder table but it was recently posed to our clergy and ritual committee members. It brought forth some personal accounts each story, in some way, confirming and reaffirming the meaning of Passover. Read them to find the common threads, perhaps to get an idea or two, and hopefully to reminisce about your own **Passovers Past**. Then we hope you will be willing to share your memories as well.

**Estelle D.** and Donald “hold in their hearts those Passover memories of Seders at home where crowded tables brought together all of their children, siblings, nieces, nephews and most of all, the proud and happy faces of Nana Jean and Nana Fannie. Donald led the traditional service with those Maxwell House Haggadahs we picked up FREE at the super-market. Pesach was indeed made sweeter with Nana Fannie’s honey cake, incomparable with any we have ever tasted before or after.”

**Ruth S.** recalls, “When Dad & Mom were in Europe, Len & I made our own first Seder all on our own. We invited friends who had children around our son’s age. Len hid the Afikomen where he thought it would be obvious to anyone since the matzoh was flat: between the ironing board covers! Ken & his little friends were about three. Several frustrated and weepy kids later, we made up a family rule about hiding the Afikomen for future Seders. It had to be visible and within reach of the youngest child who might go searching. Nothing had to be moved or climbed on to get it either.”

**Judy A.** says, “We shared almost every holiday and birthday with my mother’s family. They all lived in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. We lived in Fair Lawn. I was one of 6 cousins. Only my brother Allan, my cousin Kenny, and I went to Hebrew school--the other girls did not. Seders were very special--first conducted by my Grandpa and then later by my Uncle Arthur. I could chant the Kiddush and did so every year. My uncle always made a big fuss over this and it made me feel very special. I

remember sitting around the table reading the Maxwell House Haggadah. There is a line which goes something like: Their breasts were naked. We would slyly exchange looks with each other. To this day, when that line appears (depending on the Haggadah) I laugh to myself.”

**David R.** tells this story, “Sharon’s mother came to Minneapolis for Passover. She was upset when she found that we had invited a minister to our Seder (I was working on his campaign for local office), as she did not think non-Jews should be at a Seder. She was seated at the table next to the husband of one of Sharon’s classmates, who was also a minister - a charming southern gentleman. He started asking her about the Seder, and how it was celebrated when she was a little girl, and she began describing Seders from her childhood - stories we’d never heard before. We all sat and listened as she shared her history - and she and we had a wonderful time.”

**Judy G.** wonders “Don’t know if you are aware of the fact that David and Sharon Rubin have written their own Haggadah that combines ritual with some very personal, meaningful and powerful spiritual readings and stories? The most memorable Seders are the ones that we have spent at their house using that very special Haggadah... it is a wonderful experience to share the Seder with them” (Note: The Rubins would be happy to share their Haggadah. Just ask.)

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**Herb J.** remembers “When I was 7 or 8 years old my family got together for Passover at my Aunt Augusta's house in Brooklyn. We had the Seder in the basement because five aunts and uncles, with two kids each and my grandmother attended. It was noisy, big and fun. We could not wait for the service to be over to eat. I loved wrestling with my cousins after the service. Today, 60 years later, I have the family Seder in my basement in Franklin Lakes. 26+ people attend, 10 of which are children. It is noisy, big and fun. I try to make the service fast and kid friendly. I will encourage the youngsters to buy a house with a basement when they grow up.”

**Bruce L.** reminisces, “My first Pesach Seder in a strictly orthodox home was with Rona's cousins. It was a wonderfully warm and inclusive evening with their large family, enabling me to see how enjoyable and spiritual the Seder can be, as well as long. My favorite memory from this evening is when Rona's oldest cousin, the only son with three sisters, prepared us to NOT ASK ANY QUESTIONS so as not to lengthen the Seder even more. Of course, when his father came home from shul, who asked the first of many, many questions? The son! We all added questions which led to vital and vibrant discussions. The love of the family was all around us.”

**Emily F.** still follows a tradition with her 3 children that was started when she was a child in Union, N.J. “After the death of my great grandmother, Seders took place at my home. My grandfather was the principal cook, making the best matzo balls. My father led the Seder and hid the Afikomen. One year while my father was away from the table, my grandfather suggested that, rather than the 3 grandchildren fighting over who would get to sell back the Afikomen, it be broken in 3 parts so each could redeem a piece. When the time came, I pulled out my piece and sold it back to my dad. As he moved on in the Haggadah, my brother stopped him, pulled out his piece and contested my piece. My sister did the same. My dad had to buy back their pieces, too. We laughed so hard that we cried. My grandfather, of course, got the biggest kick out of it. He passed away when I was 14 and this is one of the fondest memories I have.”

**Sharon W.** remembers “the Seder when Uncle Jacques came to America for his first visit at age 89 and celebrated his first “real” Seder in dozens of years in our home. At our table sat 4 generations worth of guests. In honor of our most venerable one we read the Haggadah in 3 languages - English, Hebrew and French. Since Uncle Jacques was a Holocaust survivor we made it a point to discuss the potato peels we add to our Seder plate to commemorate that “plague” of modern times. We delighted that he recognized and savored so many foods from his childhood Passovers in Russia. What a powerful and memorable Passover, reminding us all about the universality of this holiday which binds all Jews, of all generations, in Israel and at all ends of the Diaspora, to our ancestors.”

**Rabbi Peg** asks, “Did you ever play the game of Hearts? You know that you can't “play hearts” until hearts are “broken”. We use the same rule during the Seder. As soon as a blessing is said (e.g. Borei pri haAdamah), you can eat that type of food before the meal begins. A friend brings beautiful bundles of blanched vegetables, salsa, hummus and guacamole. We dip more than twice, but there are fewer cries of “when do we eat?!”

**Cantor Ben** tells us that “at my family's Seders props are a must! You can buy them from many Jewish bookstores or online by doing a Google search: plague bags, plague finger puppets, 4 questions finger puppets, Moses and pharaoh action figures and more.” Ask him how they simulate blood. He offers two great web sources: <http://www.chaikids.com/site/776828/product/PP18> and <http://www.studioshofar.com/pass-kids.html>

We eagerly await hearing about your “**Memories of Passovers Past.**” Please consider sharing an interesting or poignant story by email to Sharon at [shnweiss@verizon.net](mailto:shnweiss@verizon.net).

The ritual committee extends our wishes for a  
*Zissen Pesach*  
one during which you make wonderful memories.