

YOUR OWN PERSONAL FAMILY HAGGADAH – AND FOR FREE!

[This is an article which will soon appear in InterfaithFamily.com, on-line appearing soon in network@interfaithfamily.com.]

How “personalized” to your needs, wants and creativity do you want to celebrate the Passover this year?

“DIY” - Do-It-Yourself is an American tradition, almost as much as “choice” in our lives. Computers have extended our talents and skills incredibly, and now you can provide a Passover Seder for you family and friends with a personalized Haggadah.

Important reasons to create your own Haggadah include, to name just a few, (a) A souvenir that Seder participants can take home with them, which is especially valuable if you have a family “tree” in your work; (b) You can create just what you need for the two nights, which often have different participants, skills and interests if not “time” for the evening; (c) It is an inter-generational learning and family moment creating a Haggadah together, whether parent and child(ren) or grandparent and grandchild(ren) or three generations – or more if you are so fortunate.

Please share with me my joy in choosing one of the following options, and none is intended to be a finished list, just some suggestions:

1. SIMPLE: DOWNLOAD FOR FREE the newest edition of a Haggadah in a PDF that meets mostclosely your interest from my website,

<http://www.jewishfreeware.org/downloads/>.

All the Haggadot in that website are in Hebrew, English *and* Transliteration to truly engage your Seder participants, depending upon their familiarity with the Seder, with Hebrew reading, or just visiting.

These editions in PDF format can be printed, copied and shared without limit. But note, please that, nothing may be used for commercial or profit.

Every year I add new PDF “editions” in different degrees of length and sophistication, but they all include the minimum elements of a “kosher,” traditional Seder. Currently only 5768 editions are on-line but the 5769 options will be up soon!

Be sure to download for this option a Haggadah that is marked “NO PAGE NUMBERS” in order that you can paginate the final copy before printing.

How do you make it “yours” and “personal” if it is a PDF, ready to be printed? Possibilities of personalizing a ready-to-go Haggadah include

(a) Printing and binding it – stapled, 3-hole punched in a loose-leaf binder, “coil,” comb, wire, tape, strip binding or a booklet;

- (b) Create a cover front and back in a heavier weight paper/cardboard, which then can be illustrated, painted, printed;
- (c) Edit the text by removing pages you don't intend to recite at your Seder or adding material, readings, or Seder Songs from materials available on-line at my site;
- (d) Create your own contemporary readings, illustrations, cartoons, questions and/or discussion topics which can be inserted where you want to use them;
- (e) Add a family genealogy for your concluding pages, including digital pictures, family tree, using your preferred genealogy software.
- (f) The only task is to remember to write in page numbers before you print up your copies for use

2. SIMPLEST APPROACH: DOWNLOAD FOR FREE and “open” a posted file of the Haggadah marked for *Davkewriter Platinum 6 Hebrew-English word processor*. Davkewriter Platinum 6 which has a variety of text libraries in Hebrew and English, in addition to a wide variety of supplementary Davka software photo galleries, font galleries, graphics and text handling features.

Because you are opening this download in the word-processor in which these Haggadah were created, you now can edit your Haggadah electronically - adding, removing, adapting, adopting, inserting, etc.

In addition to the suggestions above on how to make your haggadah “your own personal haggadah”, additional suggestions include

- (a) Change the Hebrew, the English and/or the Transliteration type faces/styles;
- (b) Change the the type size to meet the needs of different individuals present who may or may not be visually challenged; (
- (c) Insert digital material from a camera that you use or from a CD-ROM or any on-line or digital resource;
- (d) Scan materials such as newspaper articles, reports that participants prepare for the Seder, e.g. a comment about one of the Ten Plagues;
- (e) Change the page format using text boxes and borders;
- (f) Use color for the different texts or for emphasis, or to change the background for a page or just a text box;
- (g) Insert instructions at the beginning of the Seder or throughout the entire at each section; (
- h) Insert comments or commentary(ies) in either their own text box, or as footnotes or as endnotes.

3. NOT SO HARD: PRINT BY SECTION ala download of PDF and then use the copier of your choice. This is similar to the first option, and editing is more of a challenge – but it works nicely. Download the PDF version of the Haggadah you want and be sure it is marked “Paginated.” This means that each section or step of the Haggadah and the related text is separated from the one before and after. Thus, you'll have more “white space” if the section is short, or if it is more than one page, it may be several “full” pages and conclude with a partial page. This is a “little waste of trees,” but easy enough

to enable you to add and subtract what you want to include or eliminate. You can then create intermediate pages in any software you have or prefer, whether by computer, copier, blank paper on which you and members of your haggadah “team” paint/draw/etc.

4. MORE EXPENSIVE BUT... PURCHASE IN MULTIPLE COPIES the published version you prefer. Then download those pages from my website in PDF of the Haggadah, the Seder Songbook, and from the various collections of Haggadah Supplementary Readings. Print up sufficient copies with numbered pages to “insert” into the books you purchase.

5. CUT-AND-PASTE by using a copier – many of us remember the “old technology.” However, you can download and print selectively anything from my website, or materials from newspapers and magazines, downloads from the internet, alternative prayers and readings you want to introduce. Once you have a master, make up the number of copies you need and bind – however.

6. SUPPLEMENTARY HAGGADOT: Every year we purchase newly published or available haggadot to put on the table for people to take, according to their own interests. Then, using the shared, common Haggadah I've prepared, knowing that we are on the “same page” by number, we can have everyone adding to the discussion, comments, questions or songs in addition to whatever is shared from my website.

CAVEAT: You should know that many Haggadot are offered for sale - especially on line at such sites as Amazon and eBay in addition to other religious publications and materials – that are intended to be missionary devices. They may look “Jewish” and authentic for a Seder, but in reality they affirm other faiths and their interpretation of our tradition, books, Bible, etc.. The Jewish story is interpreted as if it always meant what they say – but we know it isn't so.

7. SEDER SONG BOOK: Available at my website: [jewishfreeware.org](http://jewishfreeware.org). It's the world's largest Seder Song Book of parodies, traditional hymns and songs. I recommend that you (1) print it up separately and bind it separately in order to sing your choice of songs as you come to the next part of the table service or (2) you select the songs from the PDF, print them and insert them physically in your Haggadah before you print it.

Write new songs once you see how many people have developed parodies – and please send them to me. I'll be delighted to share your creativity with others.

8. BUILD A LIBRARY AND START A COLLECTION: Nothing beats collecting books in my opinion. We have been collecting Haggadot for decades and have literally hundreds – some from the famous supermarket or coffee manufacturers to reprints of famous illuminated medieval manuscripts! Your creativity adds to the world of Haggadot, and

collectors like me would LOVE to receive a PDF of your Haggadah.

9. AND if you have read this far, you may want to enter your creation in the HAG HAHAGGADAH: A Creative Festival 5769, in which the rules and ideas and resources are there – prizes include a laptop, Jewish software and books. Go for it and check it out: <http://www.jewishfreeware.org/hag%20hahaggadah/>

Hag Sameah

*Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner is the President of the Foundation For Family Education, Inc., is the part-time Associate Rabbi of Congregations of Shaare Shamayim in Philadelphia and teaches for Gratz College Jewish Community High School. He has had millions of hits/downloads in more than 70 countries world-wide of holiday materials in the past 8 years of being on-line at [www.jewishfreeware.org](http://www.jewishfreeware.org). Write him at [bdlerner1@gmail.com](mailto:bdlerner1@gmail.com)*