**25 ½ New Ideas For Your Seder**

1. **Seder Name:** Why called the Seder? **R’ Asher of Stolin (1760-1826)** says it is reminiscent of the Jews in Mitzrayim. Don’t think that they just showed up on the night of Yitziyas Mitzrayim. They had to do Teshuva first, they had to get rid of their Avodah Zarah and stop looking at themselves as Egyptians. Otherwise they would have died during Makas Choshech. They had to get their lives in order, a Seder, in order to even get to the Seder table. So too, we have to look at this as a night of Teshuva. This is a night of reflection and Teshuva. To really be like the generation who left Egypt, as we must do, think about how their world was changing. They were reflective and in the process of growth and change. We must be as well.
2. **Kiddush/Shehechiyanu:** **Rav Shlomo Zalman** had a minhag to announce before Kaddeish that they should have in mind that the Shehechiyanu applies to all of the Mitzvot of the night. This is especially important because women say Shehechiyanu while lighting candles, so they would not need the Shehechiyanu in Kiddush. Since they were unlikely to have had the other Mitzvot in mind during candle lighting, it is especially important to make sure everyone focuses on that beracha and has the other Mitzvos in mind.
3. **Ha Lach Meanyah:** **Tzafnat Paneach (Ragochovir**): Matzah is called Lechem Oni, but really Chametz is the lechem oni. Matzah is the “poor man's bread” in the physical world, but Chametz is the same thing in the spiritual world. Matzah is pure, intense, unadulterated. We can't handle too much Matzah, it is hard to swallow. So we need a little “Chametz” to sweeten it, to make it more tolerable. Chametz is sour. It's yeast, it's vinegar, it in and of itself is repulsive, but mixed in with the Matzah it makes it better tasting. Matzah is our soul and chametz is our body. Our souls are limited because of our bodies. We should be able to see truth, unencumbered by our physical and emotional needs-but we can't do that. Adam's body was created from dirt, we are created from a “Tipah Seruchah”- our physicality limits us. Hashem took us quickly out of Egypt and quickly gave us the Torah before we “became Chametz”, we needed it to happen quick before we had a chance to rethink it all.
4. **YACHATZ**: Why is the middle matzah the one that is broken? The three matzahs can also represent Aharon, Moshe and Miriam, in whose merit we received the miracles that sustained us through our lives in the desert. Aharon was a Kohen, Moshe a Levi and Miriam became a Yisrael through marriage.   
   The tribe of Levi was split, into Levi and the subcategory of Kohen. We break the middle matzah to show this split. The Levi matzah, which represents Moseh, who was a Levi and not a Kohen, is split to show that it really is just a part of the original tribe.

**(4.5**) To add to this, based on something Bryce Mendelsohn said, if Moshe is represented by the middle Matzah, you can say that Moshe himself had two different sides to thim, his Jewish side and his Egyptian side. Moshe split himself in half and hid his Egyptian side, just like hiding the Afikoman.

1. **Yachatz:** Others interpret the three Matzahs as being the three Avos. The middle one would be Yitzchak. Why break Yitzchak? One answer is it reminds us of the Akeidah. He was split in two, half in this world, half sanctified for Hashem. That’s why he never left Israel. Another possibility is that Yitzchak represents Gevurah, strength. This is a lesson to us. We try to break people who are strong in their convictions because it makes us feel guilty that we don’t do the same.
2. **Mah Nishtanah:** The **Olalos Ephraim** explains that this the 4 questions are just as much about our current need of salvation, and the Seder is the Tikkun:
3. Chametz and Matzah: We are involved in gaivah and machlokes, which holds back Mashiach. On Pesach we just have Matzah, everyone gets along for one night.
4. Usually we eat what we like. This is a Mashal for money. We are living it up and that holds back our spiritual growth. The Seder night, Maror, we eat bitter foods we normally wouldn’t eat.
5. Dipping: We dip when we like. This is pleasure, we go with the extravagance of special sauces. On the Seder night we dip in salt water and charoses.
6. Leaning: In the Galus everyone is too relaxed, there is no sense of urgency. We sit, we recline. We are forced to recline to remind us that we have been too laid back.
7. **Haseibah:** The **Tur**, quoted the **Ra’avyah**, says that there is no longer an obligation to lean at the Seder night because that’s not a sign of freedom any longer. The **Aruch HaShulchan** says we still do it, but for a slightly different reason. The Mishnah does not list Haseibah as one of the 4 questions, yet it was later added. He explains that it didn’t used to be a question a child would ask, everyone leaned! Now no one does, so it’s a question. Haseibah doubles as a sign of freedom and something to make the night different and get the kids to ask questions.
8. **Avadim Hayinu:** The **Rakitchaver** asks why isn’t Avadim Hayinu one line: We were slaves in Egypt and now we’re not. Why this long answer? He explains that Hashem needs to comfort Yaakov Avinu on his way to Egypt because he has a legitimate fear. What people ever leave a living arrangement where they are provided for to go to a risky venture? That simply never happens. After being redeemed the people still keep complaining that they left the good life back in Egypt. “Hashem took us out with a strong hand”-there’s no other way we would have ever left. “If Hashem didn’t take us out we’d still be there” –no one ever leaves a country collectively after having been there for so many years. African Americans never wanted to return to Africa, they wanted to be free in their new country. This is unprecedented, and yet a running theme throughout Jewish history.
9. **BNEI BRAK**: Abarbanel: When did they tell the story? After they ate, otherwise they would have waited too long to eat and the kids would not have eaten. We wouldn't be lauding them so much if they had completely missed the point of the Seder. So why did they stay up all night? Because we're obligated to “put ourselves in their shoes”, as if we left Egypt. What was their night like? First half was the Seder, and the second half was preparing to leave Egypt. They stayed up all night; they didn't have time to rest. Imagine picking up all of your things, getting your kids together, etc. It's hard enough to get up for an early flight. But all this? To understand, on some level, what it was like, they needed to stay up all night.
10. **Bnei Brak: Rav Yisrael Salanter** asks why we need this story. Just say that we should try to tell the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim the entire night? He quotes the **Orech Chayim** on the Passuk “And you should tell your son on that day”. Yet, we learn that we need to tell the story at night when we eat Matzah and Maror. So why say tell the story during the day? The O.C. explains that the purpose of the Seder is to make the night seem like day, Hashem is in the dark, and often we can’t see Hashem and His miracles. That’s what the five of them were doing that night, turning night into day.
11. **Wise Son: Rav Kook** asks what makes the wise son so wise, he doesn’t seem to know anything? What makes the wise son’s question unique is its attention to details. “What are the Eidos, Chukim and Mishpatim”. By distinguishing between the three, it shows that he is attuned to the details of the evening. To really become wise you need to pick up on the details. To really enjoy something you need to understand it. The more you understand it, the more you appreciate it. For example, you can go to the symphony and enjoy the music, but if you understand the complexity of the music you will understand it on a much deeper level. That’s what makes him a Chacham.
12. **Wicked Son:** The **Chida** met a man without a beard and asked him why he had no beard. He said, “I was born without a beard and I continue to live without one.” He responded that he now understands why the Haggadah says the Rasha’s “teeth were blunted”. Just as he was born without teeth, so should he remain.
13. **Wicked Son:** Why is the response to “blunt his teeth”? Seems cruel. Rav Eliezer Stern explains that the Rambam (hil. Teshuva 2:4) says that when a person does Teshuva they are saying I am a new person and not the same person. So too, the Gemara in Yevamos (22a) that a convert is like a new child has been born. A new born child has no teeth, so the lesson is to knock out his teeth, help him do Teshuva and be like a newborn child.
14. **Baruch HaMakom:** What is this line doing here? What does it even mean? The **Toshvei Mevaser** says that how is Hashem “blessed”? You might think that Hashem can’t really be blessed, because Hashem created good in this world as well as bad. Hashem created the Yetzeir Harah. Hashem created slavery and suffering. Why are we blessing Hashem tonight, Hashem created evil such as Paroah? The answer is “Baruch Shenatan Torah”. Hashem created bad, but created good that can overcome it. Torah conquers Yetzer Harah, good will eventually defeat evil. In the end, good wins.
15. **Mitchilah Ovdei Avodah Zarah:** The **Kedushas Levi** says they didn’t really worship idols, it means they didn’t worship Hashem with real Kavanah, they did so half-heartedly. But aren’t there numerous sources in the Midrashim that they did A”Z? **Rabbi Yissachar Dov Hoffman** thinks that the **Kedushas Levi** means to say that they did worship A”Z, but did so out of a rote sense of doing what was the norm in Egypt. In **Shemot Rabbah** that Hashem tells them to leave aside their A”Z and to instead take the sheep for a Mitzvah. If they were ardent A”Z followers then how could that be enough? Shouldn’t they need Kapparah? Shouldn’t it be hard for them? The answer was that they didn’t really have their heart in A”Z.
16. **Metchilah Ovdei Avodah Zarah: Rogachaver:** Why do we mention Avraham's father? Why do we call Terach “our forfather”? We never call him that? Hashem didn't choose a nation by force. That would not have been fair or effective. It would not have been fair become it would call into question the very concept of free will. Without free will we don't have human responsibility or accountability. It wouldn't be effective because when a person or group is given special status not out of merit, you can never hold them accountable or expect greatness. If a king has one son and hands over the kingdom to him, success is a crapshoot. If he fails, well what did you expect, no one chose him for that job. With an elected leader, there is accountability. You were chosen because you demonstrated the talent and tools to succeed, so why aren't you living up to that? When Hashem chose Avraham, it was out of merit, not nepotism. Avraham had no Yichus, no claim to the throne. So once he was chosen to start a nation, Hashem could have expectations that they would be good, kind, loyal, honest and just. That was the criteria they were given their status. We are Avraham's descendant, but Terach's too. It defines who we are as a people and our relationship with Hashem, which is the beginning of the entire Pesach story.
17. **Maror: Rav Nachman of Breslov**: Story of the German and the Jew getting invited to the Seder. The German waits and waits, and then is shocked to find they serve Marror. Runs out upset. You do all the right things, and then something bitter happens and you complain. Realize, after the Maror comes the good stuff. So too, the Jewish people kept complaining about every little thing. If they were a little more patient they would have entered Eretz Yisrael.
18. **Matzah: Rav Kook** asks: I understand why we eat Matzah, it represents many aspects of Pesach, but why do we need to prohibit Chametz? The Jews leaving Egypt were not prohibited from eating Chametz, they simply ended up eating Matzah. He answers that Chametz represents slavery and Martzah freedom. When one is a slave you can’t do whatever you like. You must fit in your wants and needs to the multitude of demands from your master. Much like a child needs to fit their needs into the will of their parents. These “additives” are represented by Chametz, which is a lot of unnecessary filling. Matzah is our essence, without any outside factors. When the Jews left Egypt they could determine their own destiny, which is liberating and scary. The question becomes, if I could truly live however I wanted, how would I live?
19. **Korach**: The **Rokeach** says that we bring together the Pesach, Matzah and Maror just like we bring together the 4 minnim. We bring together the 4 minnim to show that all Jews are welcome, some have Torah, some and chessed, some have both and some have none. So too, Pesach is the Tzaddikim. If you spell out Pesach, pay samech tet, it equals 613. The Matzah is the benoini and the maror is the Rasha. We bring them together do help each other grow and do collective Teshuva.
20. **BeChol Dor V’Dor: Ritva** says that we need to have two separate mindsets at the Seder. In one sense we need to look at ourselves as having been saved with those who left Egypt, and in another sense we are saved in our own generation. Hashem did not save that generation merely because he wanted to save them, but because he wanted a better life for future generations. We must see how we were saved by them being saved, as well as the uniqueness of the generation we live in because we were saved.
21. **Afikoman:** It is a reminder of how the Egyptians hid their wealth from us. In the end we found it and were rewarded with wealth. So too, the Afikoman is hidden and we reward the children with a gift.
22. **Afikoman: Imrei Noam** says that this is in response to Paroah. Paroah said they had to enslave the Jewish people “Pen Yirbu”, lest they multiply (Shemos 1:10). Our response is “Kein Yirbu”, we will multiply. The gematria of kein yirbu is the same as afikoman. We will multiply! So we involve our children in this to show how we defeated Paraoh and any other nation that tried to prevent us from growing as a nation.
23. **Shifoch Chamatcha: Rav Soloveitchik:**We emphasize at the Seder that Hashem fulfilled His promise He made at the Brit Bein Habetarim (Breishit 15:14) to punish the nation that will torture and enslave us.  We develop at length how Hashem punished the Egyptians both in Egypt and at the Yam Suf.  Indeed, part of the Rambam’s (Sefer HaMitzvot 157) definition of the Mitzva of telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt includes telling how Hashem punished our oppressors.  The point of this emphasis is to demonstrate that there is a heavenly Judge and there is heavenly Justice, which is a general theme of Pesach (see Ramban at the conclusion of Parashat Bo).    
    Accordingly, in Shifoch Chamatcha we ask Hashem to fulfill His promise to punish our contemporary oppressors, those who do not know Hashem, just as He punished our Egyptian oppressors.  “Those who do not know You”, that we mention in Shifoch Chamatcha, seems to refer to those who reject the seven Noachide Laws such as the prohibition to kill people.  Even “religious” people who kill innocents seem to be included in this prayer.
24. **Who Knows One:** It says in the Sefer Matamim (1909 Rabbi Yitzchak Lipiatz of Warsaw, collection of Ashkenazi Minhagim and their reasons) why do we say this? He says at the end of the Seder we are looking forward to Mashiach. Next year in Jerusalem,Yivneh Beito B’Karov. This poem counts down all of our merits, why we DESERVE to have Mashiach. The Jewish people deserved to be taken out of Egypt, Hashem we deserve to return as well. Let us count the ways!
25. **Cha Gadya:** Why did Hashem punish the Malech Hamavet? If you follow the line of who was just, the Malach HaMavet was just! Rav Nasson Adler, Rebbi of the Chasam Sofer, had left Frankfurt in controversy. He said the problem was that the dog should never have gotten involved, it wasn’t his case, it wasn’t his fight. Small problems become big problems when outsiders get involved in issues not their own.