



## **IDEAS FOR GRANDPARENTS ALONE AT THE SEDER 2020**

*Compiled by Rabbi Eliot H. Pearlson*

*(None of this is original rather gathered from various sites and authors)*

1. Decorate your dining room with your grandchildren's photographs and artwork. You still have a week to go.
2. Take pictures of yourselves doing different parts of the Seder (like washing your hands and dipping the karpas) and send it to them to print and share at the right times during their Seder.
3. Download or write and send short explanations of the Haggadah, in very simple language to your family members. Ask your grandchildren to

read it out loud for you at their Seder. Encourage them to even imitate your voice or dress like you.

4. Buy special gifts online for this year's Afikomen. Take a picture of it and email it to them in advance. Assure them that Bubbie and Zaide will deliver the gifts as soon as this thing is over! (instead of a delivery service)
5. Ask your grandchildren to send some artistic pictures of the 15 steps of the Seder: for example, one with the cup of Kiddush, another one doing Netilat Yadayim, or holding and breaking the matzot, frogs, baby Moses, the Splitting of the Red Sea, the 10 plagues.
6. I loved the idea to ask our children grandchildren to write personal letters with their greetings, their wishes, their feelings.... And read them at an appropriate part of the Seder – like at The Four Questions (when children are supposed to speak up). Grandparents can do the same.

***MAY I RECOMMEND THAT WHEN WE COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN THAT WE EXPRESS WITH CONFIDENCE THAT “THIS TOO WILL PASS”. G-D WILLING, WE WILL NOT HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT PASSOVER TO CELEBRATE ALL TOGETHER.***

## **GREAT WEBSITES FOR PASSOVER AND SEDER PREPARATIONS**

**Chabad** has produced four “Stress Less” videos for home bound people, available [here](#). In addition, the Chasidic movement's Coronavirus Resources website is updated several times a day, available [here](#).

**Repair the World and Amplifier** have produced a resource for caring for the sick in times of crisis, available [here](#).

The **Jewish Education Project** is offering educational materials and resources for educators on dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, available [here](#).

**PJ Library** has produced “Resources for Quarantined Families,” in partnership with UJA-Federation of New York, the Foundation for Jewish Camp and The Jewish Education Project, available [here](#).

The **Israeli American Council-Mishelanu** is offering several online activities for children, adults, college students and young professionals, available [here](#).

The **Jewish Funders Network** has produced a “hub” of resources for dealing with coronavirus, geared toward philanthropists, educators and parents, available [here](#).

The **NCSY** youth movement has announced a series of offerings, including “Bringing Seder to Chaos” pre-Pesach thoughts to prepare participants for next month’s seders (available [here](#)), a “Spreading Positivity” photo-sharing template (available [here](#)), an “NCSY Box” with three boxes of educational playing cards that can be ordered online (available [here](#)), “Latte & Learn” program for teens to replace coffee house-based meetings (search for it [here](#)), and inspirational flash mobs (available [here](#)).

The pro-Israel **StandWithUs** organization launched a new digital platform that features programming for people of all ages on such topics as Antisemitism, Israeli archaeology, and Zionism, available [here](#).

Lastly, **Unpacked for Educators** has a selection of tools and resources to keep students engaged while they’re at home, available [here](#).

### **NUMBER ONE ISSUE THIS YEAR:**

- a. Many people will be on their own for the Seder this year
- b. Many Seders will be drastically reduced in numbers
- c. Few, no children or parents, or grandparents will be in attendance
- d. People are isolated, practicing social-distancing and self-quarantine
- e. Many people will literally be alone. No one to do the Seder with at all.

## QUESTIONS:

1. “How can we do Seder by ourselves?”
2. “Doesn’t the Pesach Seder need to be done with family and guests?”
3. If alone, do I steal and hide the Afikomen myself? Isn't that ridiculous?
4. **Can I ZOOM or FaceTime the Seder with other family?**

## ANSWER:



*(Rabbi Pini Dunner and Rabbi YY Jacobson taught classes this week that really helped me understand this Halachic quandary)*

- The Lubavitcher Rebbe was incredibly down-to-earth and, together with his late wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, led simple, very private lives.
- The Rebbe and his wife ate every Shabbas meal together alone. No guests. Ever.
- Just a married couple: eating, clearing the table, washing up.

“In 1988, the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s wife died. Two months later was Pesach. Every year, the Rebbe and his Rebbetzin had Seder together, alone. That year the Rebbe would be totally by himself. Who would the Rebbe conduct the Passover Seder with?”

**The Halberstam family, friends of the Rebbe from Europe, sent a**

**messenger, discreetly inviting the Rebbe to their home for Seder. The Rebbe thanked them profusely but explained that he would be having the Seder in his private office at “770” (Eastern Parkway) the International Headquarters of the movement.** Even the Rebbe’s longstanding assistant, Rabbi Leibel Groner offered to stay with the Rebbe, but the Rebbe sent him home to have Seder with his wife and children.

The great Lubavitcher Rebbe, one of the greatest rabbinic leaders of the past 500 years, had the Seder alone, on his own. Not one other person was present.

Some yeshiva boys stood outside in the street the night of the Seder. After a couple of hours, the Rebbe opened the door to welcome Eliyahu Hanavi and recited *Shefoch Chamatcha*. He walked outside holding a candle and his Haggadah, said the prayer, gave us a wave, and then went back inside to finish the Seder — by himself (Rabbi YY Jacobson published this year).

**The Talmud Pasachim 16a even states:**

“GEMARA – The Sages taught: If his son is wise and knows how to inquire, his son asks him. And if he is not wise, his wife asks him. And if even his wife is not capable of asking or if he has no wife, **he asks himself**. And even if two Torah scholars who know the *halakhot* of Passover are sitting together and there is no one else present to pose the questions, they ask each other.”

**MY ANSWER:**

The Rebbe could have had a Seder with 1000's even 10,000 people! Even today, his Chasidim arrange for seders for 100,000's of Jews all over the world.

Why did he *not invite even one person* to be with him?

The Rebbe empowered all of us today who would ever need to do their Seder alone. He wanted us to know that our solitary Passover Seder can be powerful, meaningful, and real. The Divine Presence will dwell at our Seder just as if

many people were there.

I think Rabbi Jacobson's story about the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1988 answers that question, and it eases any doubts we may have about our impending "depleted" experience. After all, *"If it was good enough for the Lubavitcher Rebbe to have the Seder on his own, trust me, your Seder is going to be just perfect!"*

## **HALACHA & THE USE OF ZOOM OR ANY ELECTRONIC VIDEO CONFERENCING METHOD ON YOM TOV**

### **Responsa:**

1. Fourteen Sephardic Orthodox rabbis say Passover Seder can be held via video conference.
2. Since the elderly are at higher risk of Coronavirus infection by meeting with young relatives...
3. The Coronavirus crisis has created an **extreme** situation that merits drawing on special leniencies in Jewish law.
4. The precedent - Shabbat laws can be put aside to give medical treatment even when patients are not in a life-threatening situation.
5. Three potential problems:
  - turning on an electrical device during a holiday
  - committing a "secular act" that cheapens holiday spiritual value
  - concern the practice continues in the future, when no longer needed

## **GUIDELINES**

**\* The devices need to be turned on before the start of the holiday and left on throughout.**

**\* Emphasize only during the present crisis and only to fulfill this mitzvah (not for visiting the homebound, entertaining friends, virtual parties, etc.)**

**\* The ruling states this allowance is granted only “to address the need to alleviate sadness from elders and the needy”.**

**THE RABBIS EMPHASIZED THAT “IT MUST BE CLEAR TO EVERYONE THAT THE RULING IS FOR A TIME OF EMERGENCY ONLY, AND THAT YOUNG PEOPLES’ CONNECTIONS TO THEIR GRANDPARENTS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF MANY SEDERS – THIS IS NOT A CARTE BLANCHE USE TECHNOLOGY ALL THE TIME EDICT.**

Rabbi Eliyahu Abergel, head of Jerusalem’s rabbinical court

Chief Rabbi Shlomo Ben Hamo, of Kiryat Gat

Rabbi Eyal Vered, Jerusalem’s Machon Meir Institution

Rabbi Yehudah Shlush, Municipal Rabbi of Netanya

Rabbi Moshe Elharar

Rabbi Refael Daloiah

Rabbi David Zano

Rabbi Daniel Boskilah

## **SUMMARY OF CONDITIONS**

- a. No changing of electronic settings
- b. No adjusting volume or camera or view
- c. If transmission is lost, no reconnecting
- d. Process must be left on and cannot be terminated
- e. Acceptance infers agreeing this is only to be used during emergency community status. Upon return to normalcy, no video conferencing for any home or synagogue holiday or Shabbat rituals will be held.