

## PESACH

I like Pesach. I like eating matzah. I like Seders. I like thinking about all the symbols, and the story of liberation, and how the Jews survived, and the importance of feeding the hungry, and being nice to strangers, and that good can triumph over evil.

What I don't like is the craziness about dishes and non-kosher stuff. My mother didn't have two sets of dishes for meat and milk, and she didn't have two sets of dishes for Pesach and for the rest of the year. She explained that in biblical times they didn't have china dishes; they had wooden dishes. Nor did they have the kind of silverware that we have today. I guess she would have said that eating implements in biblical times were also made of wood. You can't really wash wood the way you wash china and metal flatware. Give today's dishes a good washing and we can use the same dishes for meat and milk, and the same dishes for Pesach and the rest of the year.

If there were bread products, or food that was not Kosher for Passover, put them somewhere else; not in the kitchen. But don't throw them out, or give them away. They will stay until after Pesach. During Pesach, I would certainly not eat bread. When I ate lunch in school, I made matzah sandwiches. When I stopped taking sandwiches, and ate lunch in restaurants, I would ask for matzah. Of course, most restaurants did not serve matzah as bread substitutes, so I did without. Except when I had soup. Then I rationalized that the crackers that were served were like matzah, and ate the crackers.

These days, and I suspect for all the years that Fran and I have been married, we have a difference of opinion about dishes and flatware. I am perfectly happy to use the same dishes and flatware that we have been using. (It is part of my tradition.) Fran has a different tradition. She has anointed some stuff as "Pesadik," and she takes them out of their hiding place, puts them on the kitchen counter, and insists that we use them for Pesach. Then she takes out a lot of paper plates and plastic ware and insists that we use them as well. Sometimes I nodded, and did what I wanted. Sometimes I indulged her. Then I would remember "Sholem Bais" Peace in the Home, and now, I go along. It is only for eight days.

Another aspect of Pesach which bothers me is the craziness in getting ready for the seders. Thankfully, we don't do seders any more. Instead, we either get invited, and if it is getting close and we haven't been invited, we drop hints which usually results in an invitation. Nevertheless, there is the earlier craziness in getting the house ready for Pesach, and of course, in preparing whatever food Fran insists on bringing to the seder to which we are invited. Fran will never agree to just bringing some wine or a store-bought dish. She has to make something. And it is usually done just before we are to leave for the seder. I point out that it is getting late, and Fran tells me to leave her alone. Everything works out. Our hosts, who must have gone crazy getting ready for the seder, greet us warmly, thank us for whatever Fran made, and we have a great evening.

Even though I am a "guest," I insist on doing the Four Questions (fir kashes) in Yiddish, telling everyone, I have been doing this since I was eight years old. The youngest can do

it in Hebrew or English. I do it in Yiddish. And when the singing begins, I make sure to inject my ex-father-in-law's version of Ki Lo Na'eh and Adir Hu, culminating in his version of Mu Adabru, which is in the Haggadah as Ehad Mi Yodeya (Who Knows One?) If David is at the seder, we sing them together, and since he can carry a tune, it sounds a lot better than me singing alone.

We are members of the Newton Centre Minyan, and for weeks before Pesach e-mails were going back and forth demonstrating the craziness of preparing for Pesach. Most of the members are very serious about observing everything that is required to prepare for Pesach. I sent them the story about the Jew in an anti-Semitic Eastern European town who couldn't take it anymore and decided to convert. His wife said do what you think is best. After a while, he could not live with himself, and told his wife they will convert back to Judaism. His wife said fine, but do it after Pesach.

I hope that now that all the preparing has been done, everyone is having a happy Pesach.

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