

## Kol Ha-Rav March 2018

As we prepare for Pesah 5758/2018, some families may already be anticipating the political arguments that might erupt between friends and family members. That kind of toxicity adds a bitter herb to the seder plate that doesn't belong. Ideally, the seder should be a catalyst for conversation and dialogue. *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, the exodus from Egypt, is a story that has inspired and galvanized thousands of generations, and remains a tale eternally relevant, as we assess our own Egypt and the steps involved in securing redemption. That kind of exercise is most successful in an atmosphere of mutual respect, not one of mutual hostility. Immigration, gun control, health care all all issues that are appropriate to discuss.

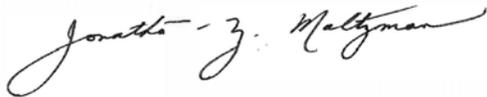
One person shared his vision of a seder that transpires in accordance with quasi-courtroom procedures such that if anyone gets out of line, an objection may be raised. Each family would appoint a judge (every family has a few lawyers that might play the part who could either sustain or overrule the objection depending on the nature of the objection). And remember:

It is not a terrible thing to bring politics to the seder table. It could enliven conversation and is almost always relevant. But what we say should add light, not heat, to a conversation.

The seder is not the time to resolve long-standing personal or political disputes. When these conflicts erupt publicly, and a seder is a relatively public event, it's cause for extraordinary discomfort and embarrassment. The family needs to act with maturity, which may be hard for those family members who just happen to be immature, even as they enter their third or fourth or ninth decade of life.

However, my sense is that no one in your family will willingly play the judge. Who wants to slap the hand of the relative with a wayward mouth? It's possible that you find an unemployed lawyer or judge who would do it for pay (plus dinner with the rest of the family), but you may not want to do that having already spent \$12,500 on Kosher for Passover food. So, here's a novel idea: self-control. Everyone has to behave and if you think someone invited to your seder table may be the sort who, under other circumstances, would raise a host of objections in a court of law, send him/her this article as a courtesy and blame me. You could say—Would you look what my rabbi wrote!

Hag Kasher v'Same'ah—a very happy and kosher Pesah, and meaningful and joyful sederim to all!



Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman