

# BETWEEN YOU AND ME: OUR STORIES

As a child, my Judaism was shaped by the memories made at the Grossman Passover Seder. Every year, about seventy people traveled from around the country and converged in Detroit, Michigan to spend two matzah filled days. The two Seders included: my grandfather and father's generations chanting the Hebrew from the Maxwell House Haggadah, while my generation sat there wondering when we were going to eat; excitedly awaiting my turn to sing *ma nishtana* (note that bad singing under age 13 is still cute) or to read an English paragraph complete with the difficult pronunciations of our ancient sages' names; and the smell of the fish in my great aunt's home from days of making fresh gefilte fish.



Rabbi Grossman

The much-anticipated meal, more than a time to fill up on the delicious food, was the loudest the room became. My family at their table and across the tables discussed their views on politics, sports, and life. Following the meal came the final songs of *echad mi yodea* and *chad gadya* and the words, "Next year in Jerusalem." Everyone took a different job—clearing off the table, shaking the tablecloth or sweeping the room. And afterwards, my grandfather, father, and at least eight other men would sit and play poker. Since a child was not allowed into the game until age 18, I sat watching the after-Seder poker minyan mesmerized by the game, waiting patiently to help my father play a hand. And on those years that Passover fell in early April, breaks in the poker action would include watching the Monday college basketball NCAA championship game. The two most memorable were at age 13 when Kansas beat Oklahoma, solidifying my first NCAA Tournament Bracket win.

At the core of the Passover Seder is the *maggid*—the narration of our ancestors' story. However, beyond the retelling of our people's freedom, it is an opportunity to put oneself into the narrative. In one capacity this challenges us to recall the moments in the past year where we identify our personal plagues and seek redemption. Yet, simultaneously, it offers us the ability to discover, create, and experience new stories. It's these individual memories, originating at each of our Passover Seders, which personify the significance of our Jewish being and add to the ongoing Jewish narrative. The Grossman Family Seder, complete with the integration of Jewish tradition and Americanism, is central to my understanding of and connection with Judaism.

So, as we, together, prepare for Passover this year, may our holiday of freedom provide each of us a chance to learn our histories, to make new memories, and to build upon our collective stories.

May you go from strength to strength.

L'Shalom,  
Rabbi Adam Grossman

*If you have room at your seder table, or would like a place to go, please contact Erma Cohen, 901.937.2770, at Temple, and we will do our best to accommodate you.*

In a hushed voice the person next to you at Seder whispers, "How long before we eat? This section takes so long; could we do the Cliff notes version?" You've probably heard this at some Passover Seder in your life. It seems as though while we enjoy celebrating with families and friends, we really just want to get the Seder part done and enjoy the brisket and matzah balls. Ironic, because Passover is the most popular celebration of the Jewish year!



Sally Rosenberg

So, when I inherited my family's Passover seder (yes, traditions are inherited just like antiques), I was determined to create an experience that no one wanted to rush. My mother's seders were beautiful, warm, and creative. While we followed the Haggadah, Mom always left room for spontaneous interjections and creative observations. Inspired by Mom, I challenged myself to take our Seder to the next level. Doing my research, I learned that the "kosher" parts of a Seder only take about 10 minutes, allowing for hundreds of creative Haggadot, and I found one that made ancient freedom relevant—just what we wanted, but with a twist.

Since Pesach is fresh on the heels of Purim, some of that joy and laughter should seep into our Pesach Seders, too. Our children loved dressing up and participating wholly (adults like it too). We wanted the children at the seder to "get it," to know our people's struggling and dreaming together and to understand that freedom is liberating, fun, and for everyone.

At Bayit Rosenberg every year, accompanying our Haggadah experience, we empty the garage and fill it with family, friends, and frogs and have a "themed" Seder, with costumes, songs, and genuine joy. We've celebrated creatively as Pirates of the Red Sea, Star Trek adventurers with Israel as the Final Frontier, a Harry Potterstein magical confrontation with He Who Must Not be Named (Pharaoh), and Super Heroes with "Jewper" powers finding freedom.

But wait. There's more! We write songs yearly to match the current theme. Everyone loves to sing, and no one's rushing to finish. The Rosenberg's Rowdy- not-So-Kasher-L'Pesach Songbook is now 28 pages with 53 songs to tunes like "Moses is the Guy We'll Follow" ("Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"), "Hebrew Wizard" ("Pinball Wizard"), or "Spider-Mensch" ("Spiderman"). We Rap the Maggid section, thanks to my talented father in law, z"l. And for the younger children we host pyramid building contests with blocks. Those invited share in the creation of this experience as well.

If you were to ask my children as youngsters their favorite holiday, they never answered, "Chanukah." Instead, they exclaimed with contagious grins, "Pesach! We have a really crazy, fun seder."

Yes, we've made a sacred tradition our own. Our goal was for everyone to "get it." Got it. And it's good.

L'Shalom,  
Sally Rosenberg