

IMAGINE THAT!

Empathy and Discovery at the Seder



**PEDAGOGY
OF PARTNERSHIP**
How we learn is what we learn.

The Haggadah tells us, "in every generation, each person is obligated to see themselves as if they personally left Egypt." But that sounds really hard to do! How can you really see yourself doing something as monumental as leaving Egypt if that's not what you really did?

The answer is: it will take a lot of imagination—and this is actually vital to how we learn. We all know what it feels like to want to be understood, and it turns out that the stories we study, including this one about leaving Egypt, "want" to be understood too. To do that, we have to pay attention to what the story is trying to tell us, using our imaginations to witness the story from the inside. The closer we place ourselves to the story's details, the better we can relate to them and understand them.

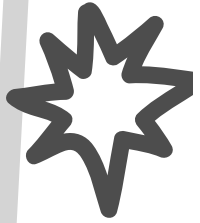
Here is an activity for your Seder to help you use imagination to discover new perspectives about what this night is all about.

When you arrive at a place in the Haggadah that feels "juicy" or interesting, call out, "**Imagine that!**" Everyone should then turn to the person next to them and do the following:



Step 1: Imagine!

One person should say "I imagine..." and then try to describe that part of the Haggadah from the perspective of someone actually living through it. Focus on imagining the possible emotions, sensations, and environment that person might have experienced. It may help to start your sentences with phrases like, "I imagine I see/hear/feel..." or "I imagine it looks/sounds/feels like..."



Step 2: Clarifying and understanding

Now is a good time to check for understanding. The person listening should follow up with questions such as, "I hear you saying that... Did I get that right?" or "Can you tell me more about...?" Give the speaker the chance to elaborate further on the experience they are imagining.

Step 3: Switch roles and repeat

Step 4: Learning from each other

Come back together as a group. A couple of participants should share a reflection about:

- a new perspective they gained from this activity, or
- how it felt to have someone listen closely to the experience they shared.

Suggested Haggadah passages to try this with:

- *Arami oved avi* (and its commentary): This section includes a lot of vivid description of the Israelite experience in Egypt. Consider what your experience would have been like in any of the lines of this section.
- The ten plagues: What might it have been like to live through each of the ten plagues?
- *Dayyeinu*: Any line from this classic song is a chance to imagine how each element of the Exodus story would have been "enough."
- *Matzah*: How might it have felt to make dough and then suddenly need to bake it before it had risen, because the Exodus was happening?
- *Maror*: How might the bitterness of slavery have felt to you?