

Goals:

1. To educate PP's about Pesach customs in other communities
2. To learn that Pesach is not the same around the world
3. To learn about Sephardic Jews

Objectives:

1. PP's will learn about the Sephardic seder plate and Sephardic charoset
2. PP's will make their own Sephardic seder plates
3. PP's will make Sephardic charoset

Program Outline:

1. Introduction 0:00-0:05
2. Discussion..... 0:05-0:10
3. Station 1..... 0:10-0:30
4. Station 2..... 0:30-0:50
5. Station 3..... 0:50-1:10
6. Wrap Up..... 1:10-1:15

Materials:

Skits

Information sheets for group leaders

Text study sheets

Clear plastic plates

Tissue paper

Decoupage glue

Foam brushes

White paper

Pens

Markers

Newspapers

Black raisins

Dates

Figs

Apples

Sweet red wine

Cinnamon

Walnuts

Knives

Cutting boards

Bowls

Spoons

Small plates for tasting

Introduction:

Leaders act out the following conversations:

1.

Jake: So Isaac, are you excited for Pesach?

Isaac: Jake, what's exciting about Pesach? You can't eat anything for a whole week!

Jake: What do you mean? There's matzah, and potatoes, and chicken, and . . .

Isaac (interrupting): and matzah, and matzah, and matzah! There's only matzah!

Jake: What about rice, and beans, and corn, and tofu . . . ?

Isaac: We don't eat those in my house. My parents don't let us eat rice! That's definitely not allowed during Passover.

Jake: That's weird—we make a special point of eating rice at the Seders. Why do you think we're so different?

2.

Sarah: Hey Rachel, come with me to the store to buy the ingredients for charoset!

Rachel: Sure! I can get mine at the same time!

(walk to store)

Sarah: Okay . . . according to the recipe that my mom gave me, we need black raisins, dates, figs, an apple, and sweet red wine.

Rachel: That's weird charoset! Who puts raisins and dates and figs in charoset? In my house we make it with apples, walnuts, cinnamon and wine. It's so much better that way!

Sarah: How do you know until you try? Just because that's what you're used to doesn't mean it's better . . .

3.

Jason: I just made a seder plate in Hebrew School!

Amy: So did I! Let me see yours! . . . That's weird, why does yours have a space for Matzah? Mine doesn't have that!

Jason: Well, it's weird that yours doesn't! We always have matzah on the seder plate at my seder!

Amy: We never have it at mine—let's go ask the rabbi what this is about!

Discussion

Break into small groups to discuss the skits. Ask the following questions, and supplement answers with the facts on the Sephardic study sheet.

Skit one: Does anyone know why Jake ate rice, beans and corn and Isaac didn't?

Answer: Rice, beans and corn fall under the category of *Kitniyot*. During Pesach, the rabbis understood the Torah's prohibition about eating leavening as to refer to five grains: wheat, oats, barley, rye and spelt. Over time, some rabbis expanded the prohibition to include other grains, seeds, legumes and other small objects used for flour or as grain. The Hebrew word for small is *katan*; kitniyot are these foods that are not specifically forbidden in the Torah on Pesach. At a certain point in history, Ashkenazic rabbis were afraid that the people would think that since eating corn is okay,

oats and other grains would also be okay by extension. Therefore they banned *kitniyot*; it was like building a fence around the law so that the law would definitely not be broken. Sephardic Jews, however, have a long history of being more lenient in their interpretation of the Torah; therefore, many Sephardic Jews eat rice, beans and other *kitnayot*.

Skit two: What were the differences in these charosets?

Answer: The one with raisins, figs and dates is from a Sephardic tradition, whereas the other was from an Ashkenazic tradition. This specific charoset is a recipe from Turkey, where charoset is made in a different way.

Skit three: What was the difference in these seder plates?

Answer: There are two major trends in Judaism regarding the arrangement of the Passover Seder Plate: most Sephardim follow the one prescribed by the Ari, while most Ashkenazim follow the Shulhan Aruch. The predominant Sephardic custom, namely the Syria, Turkey, Greece, Eretz Israel, Moroccan traditions, has 3 matzot on it, along with the other six elements that one would find on an Ashkenazic seder plate. (A different Sephardic custom is that of the Spanish Portuguese of Holland: they used 3 different plates, with 3 items in each).

Sephardic matzot are thinner than Ashkenazic, are round, and tend to be cooked so that they are darker. They are called matzah shmurot. Ashkenazic matzot are square, thicker, and tend to be mostly white in color.

Divide into groups for stations.

Station 1: Seder Plates

Each person will take a piece of white paper and draw (or write) the 6 symbols of the Ashkenazic seder plate, or the 7 symbols of the Sephardic. (Ashkenazic: maror (bitter herbs), beitzah (egg), zeroa (shankbone), karpas (parsley), charoset, hazeret (bitter herb, like romaine lettuce). Sephardic is the same, with the addition of 3 matzot). They will cut these out (color them in, if applicable) and glue them to the bottom of their clear plastic plates so that when looking at the plate, one can see the symbols on the other side. They will then decoupage tissue paper over the symbols: put a thin layer of glue on the plates, then add a piece of tissue paper, then put the glue over that. Do not layer too thick or else it won't dry. If there's time, make both the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic!

Station 2: Text Study

See attached sheet for text study station

Station 3: Charoset

Make Charoset following the Sephardic recipe from Turkey:

Ingredients

1 cup black raisins
1 pound dates (non-pitted)
1 cup figs
1 apple
1 cup sweet red wine

Preparation

Prepare the dates (take the seeds out) Clean the figs and peel and cut the apple in cubes. Grind all the fruits together. Add the wine and mix well .

Make Charoset following the Ashkenazic recipe:

Ingredients

1 apple
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup walnuts
2 tsp sweet red wine
cinnamon to taste

Chop the apple and raisins. Mix together with the other ingredients. Add any ingredients to taste.

Wrap-up

Show each other seder plates, share charoset. Leader emphasizes that although we have different customs, we are all Jewish. We celebrate the same holidays, but in different ways, and we have a lot to learn from one another. For more information on Sephardic culture, go to:

www.sephardim.com

http://www.haruth.com/Sephardic_Stuff.htm

<http://sephardicconnect.com>

Text Study Sheet

Mishnah Pesachim 2:5

אלו דברים שאדם יוצא בהן ידי חובתו בפסח בחיטים בשעורים בכוסמין ובשיפון
ובשבולת שועל

“These are types of grains through bread made from which a person fulfills his obligation to eat unleavened bread on Passover: (1) wheat, (2) barley, (3) spelt, (4) rye, and (5) oats.”

Mishnah Torah Laws of Leavening and Matzah 5

אין אסור משום חמץ בפסח אלא חמשת מיני דגן בלבד, והם שני מיני חטים שהן החטה והכוסמת, ושלושת מיני השעורים שהן השעורה ושבולת שועל ושיפון, אבל הקטניות כגון אורז ודוחן ופולים וערשנים וכיוצא בהן אין בהן משום חמץ אלא אפילו לשקמה אורז וכיוצא בו ברותחין וכסהו בבגדים עד שנתפח כמו בצק שהחמיץ הרי זה מותר באכילה שאין זה חמץ אלא סרחון.

Nothing is forbidden during Pesach except five kinds of grain, and they are two types of wheat and three types of barley. But the *kitnayot*, such as rice and millet and beans and lentils and such are not considered leaven. Even if one makes flour from rice or boils it until it ferments or covers it with a cloth until it swells into a dough that has been leavened – this is allowed to be eaten for it had not leavened but [changed through the process of] decay.

Shulchan Aruch Orech Haim 452

אלו דברים שיוצאים בהם ידי חובת מצה, בחטים ובשעורים ובכוסמין ובשבולת שועל ובשיפון, (והמנהג ליקח לכתחלה חטים), (מהרי"ל), אבל לא באורז ושאר מיני קטניות, וגם אינם באים לידי חימוץ ומותר לעשות מהם תבשיל. הגה: ויש אוסרים (טור והגהות מיימוני פ"ה ומרדכי פ' כל שעה). והמנהג באשכנז להחמיר,

These are the things that one fulfills the obligation of the rules regarding matzah: wheat, barley, spelt, rye and oats (and the custom is to use wheat whenever possible) but not rice or other types of *kitnayot*, and these don't really leaven and are permitted for use in cooking. [Rabbi M. Isserles states, however,] that these are forbidden. And the tradition in Ashkenaz is to be more stringent.

Questions:

1. The Mishnah Torah and the initial statement of the Shulchan Aruch represent Sephardic tradition. Given that rice and other *kitnayot* are not even mentioned in the Mishnah, why did the rabbis need to make any comment about them if they were going to be permitted?
2. After the Shulchan Aruch was written by Joseph Karo, a Sephardic rabbi, an important Ashkenazi rabbi named Moses Isserles added a gloss that would serve as the guiding rules for Jews of central and eastern Europe, the place from which most North American Jews trace their origins. Why might he have decided to prohibit what was already allowed by others?
3. Can you think of a time in your life when you have been more stringent or more lenient about a rule? How about a time when someone added additional clarification to a rule that might not have been necessary?
4. In making your own decisions about Jewish choices, do you think people should always choose strict interpretations, more lenient interpretations, try to find a consistent middle ground, or choose what ever works at any given time?

Sephardic Jewry

Sephardim are descendants of Jews who lived in Spain or Portugal before the expulsion of 1492. Some Jews accepted conversion at the time, others moved away to North Africa, Italy, and especially Turkey, creating the Sephardi Diaspora. The Sephardim were highly influenced by the long time they had spent in Spain, therefore took with them the language, songs, and many customs.

The language spoken by Sephardim is called Ladino. It is based on Spanish, but has loanwords from Hebrew, Turkish and other languages. (It can be compared to Yiddish, the mix of Hebrew and German spoken by Ashkenazim). A few examples of this include the word for ark, *hekchal*, and synagogue, *esnoga*. They call a prayerbook *tefillot*, whereas the Ashkenazim call it a *siddur*.

Most of the differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim are in custom or interpretation. Many Sephardim settled in places where they enjoyed a life relatively free of external constraints in the practice of their religion, and they had a fair measure of security of life and property. This may be the reason why many of them displayed a more sympathetic attitude to outside culture. Examples of differences between Ashkenazim and Sephardim include eating kitniyot on Pesach, or the way tefillin is wrapped around the arm (Ashkenazim wrap inward, Sephardim wrap outward), and the look of the lulav on Sukkot (Sephardim decorate theirs with colored ribbons and do not use the holder that Ashkenazim use).

Although Ashkenazim and Sephardim clearly have some different practice, each stream lives a uniquely Jewish life.