

# HOW TO USE THIS SITE

## ... FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

## ... AT A PASSOVER CELEBRATION

### ... FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

*Exodus Conversations* has been designed for use in interfaith dialogue and also at the celebration of Passover (the Passover Seder). To use it for interfaith dialogue, we suggest these steps:

1. Review the themes and questions below.
2. Choose a number of themes and questions that interest you and your group and that can be covered over the course of your discussion. (Multiple meetings, held over an extended period, enable relationships needed for deeper conversation to develop.) \*
3. Send out the questions in advance of each meeting to participants along with the responses of our three Exodus Conversation scholars. (You can download this material and send it or simply direct participants to the proper place on the site.)

\* If you can hold more than one session, we suggest starting with one of the three downloadable comparisons of the Exodus story. Two compare the Book of Exodus and the Qur'an, and the third brings in the New Testament. Each comparison includes questions for discussion. Beginning this way grounds your dialogue in the story, which, though shared, has taken on different meanings in these three faith traditions.

### ... AT A PASSOVER CELEBRATION

You can use *Exodus Conversations* to enliven a Passover Celebration, (a Passover Seder) of any kind. The Passover Haggadah (the guide to the Passover Service) says that, "All who elaborate on telling the story of the Exodus deserve praise." That's reason enough to bring selections from

*Exodus Conversations* into the Passover Seder, the celebration traditionally held on the first two nights of the festival. Here are some ways to do this:

1. Review the list of themes and discussion questions below and choose a few questions that you think would engage your Seder participants. Each of the 16 themes relates to a particular passage in the Passover Haggadah. (Look through the Passover Haggadah on the site to see which passage in the Haggadah relates to each of these 16 themes.)
2. When you reach that passage in the Haggadah (or at another point you feel would be appropriate), discuss the questions. (For an interfaith Seder, be sure to ask participants from the varied religious traditions at the table to share their responses to the questions.) Allow time for discussion.
3. Follow up your discussion by reading aloud selections from the Exodus Conversation scholars' responses to these same questions.

AND/OR

#### Discuss the Shared Story of the Exodus

Depending on your Seder's length, in addition to or in place of the above, you may want to focus on comparing the Exodus as appears in the scripture of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

You'll find a side by side comparison of how the story appears in the Bible and the Qur'an as well as shorter downloadable versions (one that also features Exodus motifs from the New Testament) with discussion questions. These comparisons might work particularly well near the beginning of the Seder, following the Four Questions and the paragraph that concludes, "All who elaborate on telling the story of the Exodus deserve praise." You may want to bring in selections from the Exodus Conversations scholars' comments about the significance of the story within each tradition.

#### EXODUS CONVERSATIONS: THEMES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### 1. Blessing

1. What does it mean for humans to bless God?
2. What does a blessing accomplish?
3. Why call God "sovereign of the universe?"

## 2. Choosing One People?

1. What are the implications of believing your group is chosen or exalted by God?

## 3. Washing

1. From what do we need purification?
2. What role does washing play in our traditions?

## 4. Caring

1. How do you understand the obligation to care for the needy?
2. How do you view the relationship between physical and spiritual needs?
3. What is your tradition's approach to charity (for Christians), *zakat* (for Muslims), or *tzedakah* (for Jews)?
4. How do you decide how much you should give?

## 5. Teaching and Learning

1. Are you anxious about passing down your faith tradition?
2. What kinds of knowledge does your tradition value?
3. What role does ritual play in passing down our traditions?

## 6. Interpreting Law

1. What role does the sense of doing God's will play in your religious life?
2. How central is the concept of religious law to you?
3. How do you understand the relationship between religious law and the notion of a divinely revealed text?
4. How does your religious community handle issues of dissent?

## 7. Treating Strangers

1. What wisdom do you find in your tradition in relating to people of other faiths?
2. Who are the strangers among us and how do we define them?
3. Where has your community fallen short of its ideals in its relationship to members other communities?

4. What tensions do you experience between elements within your tradition that are more embracing of the “other” and those which are more exclusive?

## 8. Rescuing

1. How do we understand God’s rescuing role in history?
2. Given the magnitude of human suffering, how is it possible to believe in an all just, all powerful God?
3. How does your tradition help you cope with suffering?
4. What are the dangers in seeing ourselves as victims?

## 9. Struggling Against Oppression

1. How does your tradition understand oppression?
2. In what ways does your tradition serve as a basis for countering oppression?
3. In what ways have people in your tradition used it to justify oppression?
4. What are the resources in your tradition for struggling against our inner Pharaohs?

## 10. Recognizing Women

1. What are your hopes for women in your tradition?
2. Where are women in our traditions’ central narratives?
3. What roles have our traditions assigned to women in the past?
4. What is the status of women in our traditions today?

## 11. A Loving *and* Punishing God?

1. How can we reconcile images of the merciful God with passages of God engaging in violent acts?
2. How do our traditions treat texts that attribute violence to God?

## 12. Experiencing the Divine

1. How do we experience God?
2. How do our traditions speak of God and to God?
3. What roles do music and the arts play in experiencing the divine?

### 13. Eating and Drinking

1. From a religious perspective how do you relate to eating and drinking?
2. What are some of your tradition's customs or rules concerning meals and food?
3. What significance does bread have in your tradition?
4. How does your community view drinking wine or abstinence?

### 14. Seeing God on Our Side

1. Is it a good idea to believe that God is on our side? Why?
2. How has violence been justified by claiming God is on our side?

### 15. Dying

1. What is the meaning of death in your tradition?
2. In what ways do the rituals of your tradition help to provide consolation to mourners?
3. How does your tradition relate to the concept of life after death?
4. How does your community care for its sick and dying members?

### 16. Making Peace in Jerusalem

1. What are some of your hopes for Jerusalem?
2. What is the spiritual significance of Jerusalem in your tradition?
3. What are some of your community's myths about Jerusalem?