What does the Seder mean to you this year?

Seder is about questions:

1. The four questions
2. The four sons who are wise, simple, wicked and don't even know how to ask
3. It was that third son, the wicked who said what does this seder mean to **<u>you</u>** that our tradition takes to task.
    a. Why was he wicked?
        i. Because he didn't ask, 'what does it mean to me?", but rather 'to you', as though he was not part of the story and the redemption.
4. Our Haggadah explains that **<u>each</u>** generation must see itself as part of the story.
    a. For me this is the amazing and powerful thing about seder, though the story is old, it is eternally relevant.
    b. We are all strangers in our own lands, near, far, literal or figurative.
        i. We are all enslaved, yearning to be free of something.
        ii. And most of all we all searching for meaning, for purpose for insight in how to navigate our

own *mitzrayim* our own, Egypt, our own narrow places as the word truly means.

5. So we asked ourselves tonight, what does seder this year mean to me?
    a. What aspects of this all too familiar story speak to me this year?
6. The mishnah tells us *Turn it, and turn it again, for everything is in it; And contemplate it, and grow old and gray over it, and stir not from it, for you have no better principle than it.*
7. So as I turn the seder story over and over again you know what stands out most to me, ARGUMENTS
    a. not only of my family, who sits where, who reads next, who brought what desert, what year was it when – name the family incident or affront that took place.
    b. But also the arguments of the haggadah itself.
8. It speaks so well I think of our people that we dedicate a night to questions and argument and debate and discussion,
    a. And still it is a night that begins and ends with blessings and celebrations

b. We say at the end lets do this again, next year in Jerusalem.

9. What the seder means to me this year it means respect and civility.

10. The Hagaddah, Our Passover text includes a passage about five rabbis who celebrated the holiday together and believed the Seder was meant to awaken them to action for a better world. They were a diverse gathering: Rabbi Eliezer, a brilliant elder who held views all other sages rejected; Rabbi Joshua, a poor man whose understanding of salvation included righteous non-Jews; Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, a young sage who challenged the elitism of his era's academic hierarchy; Rabbi Akiba, the late-blooming scholar of means who called for the Bar Kochba armed revolt against Rome; Rabbi Tarfon, who was Rabbi Akiba's friend but also his sparring partner over matters of law.

    a. There could not have been a more diverse and argumentative group of people around a seder table, and you thought your family was dysfunctional?

11. Similarly, the Talmud teaches of Hillel and Shamai to two main characters of the haggaddah (and well except for Moses and Pharoah); their schools, Beit Hillel and Beit

Shammai differed strongly on many different things, and battled in the academy, but they ate in one another's houses and their children married one another. (Yevamot 14b)

a. In spite of their differences they respected each other, actually BECAUSE of their differences and their passion for their positions they respected and admired each other.

12. Can we learn that from seder? That we can agree to disagree and not be disagreeable in the process?

13. Judaism, the seder - our master story provides a different model, indeed not as a suggestion but as a commandment.

a. All arguments are to be *l'shem shamayim* for the sake of heaven, for the betterment of God world. Not to tear down but to build up and if they are not they are a sin, they are not worth the breath it takes to enter into them.

14. We have enshrined as the most celebrated of holidays, an evening of debate and argument. Why?

a. ONE to tell the story

b. But also to model for everyone around the table **how** to tell the story, **how** to reason and **how** to disagree with love and civility.

15. The Seder is a model for every day of the year, be as passionate as Hillel and Shammai, make yoru circle of friends in the real world and on Facebook as diverse as the Rabbis at B'nai Barak.

a. Make your case, state your opinion, challenge those of others, but at the end.

i. We break bread (or matzah) together

ii. Our voices join together in song and blessing.

iii. We share a bit of wine and we help each other home safely so we can do this again next year, indeed the very next night.

16. That is what the seder means to me – it means argue, debate, dialogue, but do it all *l'shem shamayim* for the sake of heaven, to make the world a better place.