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## **Instructions for Facilitator.**

1. Please place a toy/stuffed elephant on the seder table - preferably closer to when the Seder Starts.
2. Don't intentionally draw attention to the elephant - wait for someone to ask .
3. If someone asks about it at a good time, great. If they ask about the elephant too early, tell them you'll explain in a little bit.
4. When you're ready to explain the elephant, turn to page 2.

# Page 2

## Explanation of the Elephant's Role @ the Seder

**When you're ready to explain the game, read the following:**

The Passover Seder is filled with symbols and symbolism. We have a ritual washing of the hands, there is a seder plate filled with symbolic items, and maybe even Savta will symbolically (and literally) whip us with scallions. The symbols are present to remind us of themes related to the Passover Holiday, and to serve as a stimulus for discussion and reflection.

But who said the symbols are limited to those prescribed in the Hagaddah? In recent years we have seen the addition of symbolic items to the table. Many have recently added a *Kos Shel Miriam* - Miriam's Cup - to remind us of the role Miriam played in the Exodus from Egypt. After a prominent Rabbi said there would be women Rabbis when there was an Orange on the Seder plate, many people took him at his word - you can find citrus on many seder tables.

The literal Elephant in the room is an example of a new symbol on the Seder table. I have one explanation for the presence of an Elephant on the Seder Table, but first we should all take some guesses as to what the Elephant symbolizes. Later on, I'll read my explanation.

So, who has any ideas for what an elephant might symbolize?

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## An Elephant Explanation

*Why did I put an elephant on the table? To symbolize memory. We have all heard about elephants having a good memory, but I personally never knew a serious answer (it's not because they keep things in their trunk...). Apparently they have very large brains, and Elephant matriarchs are able to remember where their watering holes are over very large areas.*

*But the elephant is just the symbol, right? The real point is about memory. On Passover, we are fulfilling the biblical commandment to remember what God did for us when he took us out of Egypt. We are required every day, and particularly on Passover, to remember something that happened thousands of years ago to our ancestors. But why do we need to have a Seder to remember this story? On Purim we remember the story by reading Megillat Esther - couldn't we just go to synagogue and read relevant portions from the Torah? What's with the whole production?*

*Some psychiatrists say that research into memory tells us that when we remember things, we re-encode them in our brains. It's not simply an act of recall, but we have the potential to rewrite the memory in our heads. The more involved and elaborate the recollection, the more impactful the re-encoding can be. By talking about and acting out the seder, in some small way we are actually making ourselves part of the story.*

*So when you look at this little cute elephant on the table, think about how your memory and connection with Passover and Jewish Heritage/values can be affected by participation in the seder. Think about ways to internalize the lessons of tonight.*

*And if you enjoyed this activity, maybe you have your own symbol you can bring to tomorrow night's seder. Put some thought into your item, and place it on the table for Seder #2.*