

Passover @Home

A Jewish LearningWorks Guide for Families with Young Children



Passover @Home is a guide for families that is designed to enhance your celebration of the holiday. It includes a child-friendly version of the Passover story, explanations of rituals and traditions, *haggadah* recommendations, suggestions for planning a *seder*, recipes, resources and more. We at Jewish LearningWorks wish you a happy and meaningful Passover holiday!

Happy Passover!


JewishLearningWorks
Reach. Teach. Ignite.

HAPPY PASSOVER!

חַג פֶּסַח

Chag / Pay-sach / Sah-may-ach

Note on Pronunciation: The Hebrew word for holiday, Chag, begins with the guttural sound made by the Hebrew letter Chet, as in *Chutzpah* and *L'Chayim*. Throughout this guide, this sound will be shown as Ch.

Passover, or Pesach in Hebrew, commemorates the liberation of the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus is one of the central biblical narratives of the Jewish people and we call Passover *Z'man Cherutaynu*, Season of our Freedom. Recalling our own history of oppression reminds us to stand up against all forms of injustice.

We retell the Passover story at a festive ritual dinner called a seder. In Hebrew, the word seder means “order” and, in this case, it refers to the

step-by-step order of the 15 parts that make up the seder itself. A special booklet called a *haggadah* guides us to re-enact the narrative and fulfill the Torah’s instruction to see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. During the seder we say, “Once we were slaves; Now we are free”.

Erev Pesach, the first night of Passover, begins at sundown on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of *Nissan* and lasts for a week or more (8 days in Orthodox, Conservative, and other traditional communities outside of Israel; 7 days in Israel and in Reform Jewish communities). Jews in Israel have one seder. Traditionally, Jews in the rest of the world have a seder on both the first and second nights of the holiday. For this year’s dates, see: www.hebcal.com/holidays/pesach

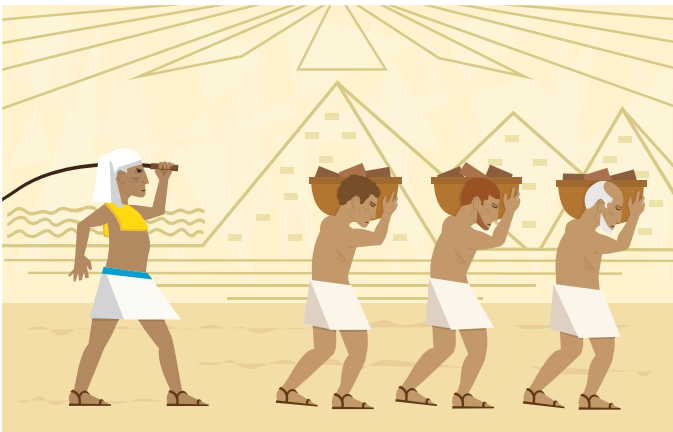
Observed for thousands of years, the holiday viscerally connects us to the dramatic events of deliverance from slavery that led to the physical and spiritual birth of the Jewish nation.



A Child-Friendly Version of The Passover Story

Note: In the biblical book of Exodus, the origin of this story, the Jewish people are referred to interchangeably as Israelites, Hebrews, and the Children of Israel.

A long time ago, there was a king in Egypt named Pharaoh. He was scared of the Israelites who lived in his kingdom because there were so many of them and they were strong. Pharaoh made the Israelites his slaves and forced them to work very hard making bricks to build cities and pyramids. They weren't given enough food to eat or water to drink or time to rest.



An Israelite woman named Yocheved had a daughter named Miriam and a son named Aaron. When she gave birth to another baby, a boy, she hid him so that he would be safe from Pharaoh. When he was three months old, she wrapped him in a blanket and put him in a basket. She told Miriam to put the basket into the river Nile and to watch to make sure that it was found by a good and kind family. Pharaoh's daughter found the basket and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." The baby was named *Moshe* (Moe-Sheh), Moses in Hebrew, meaning "pulled from the water." Miriam suggested to Pharaoh's daughter that an Israelite woman



could nurse the baby and Pharaoh's daughter agreed. Miriam brought the baby back to Yocheved who took care of him until Moses was old enough to live in the palace.

Moses grew up to be a good man who saw how badly the Israelite slaves were being treated and how unhappy they were. Moses decided to

go far away to a place called Midian. He learned to be a shepherd there and lived happily for a long time. One day, while he was taking care of some sheep, Moses saw a burning bush. He heard God's voice telling him





“passed over” the houses of the Israelites (which is why we call the holiday “Passover”). The plagues got worse and worse and Pharaoh finally told Moses to take the Israelites and get out of Egypt.

Moses called the Hebrew people together and told them to quickly pack up their things. They baked bread for the journey but the dough didn’t have time to rise. The unleavened bread came out flat like a cracker. They left as quickly as they could and went out into the desert.

Back in Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind and led his soldiers in a chase to bring the Israelites back. When the Children of Israel arrived at the edge of the Red Sea, they feared that they were trapped. Pharaoh’s army was coming up behind them and the sea was blocking the way in front of them. A miracle happened - the sea opened up so that the Israelites could pass through on dry land to the other side.

Then the waters closed up so that the Egyptians could not follow them. The Children of Israel were free from Pharaoh at last! They celebrated, danced and sang songs of thanks to God for their freedom.



to go back to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses was nervous that he wouldn’t be able to do this by himself but God promised to be with him.



Moses went back to Egypt and went with his brother, Aaron, to ask Pharaoh to free the Israelites. Pharaoh hardened his heart and said “No!” Moses said that bad things called plagues would happen to the Egyptians if Pharaoh did not give in, but still he would not let them go. God sent 10 terrible plagues including bugs and storms and frogs and darkness. The plagues only affected the Egyptians because they

Passover Food & Drink

One way we re-enact the story of liberation at the Passover seder is through symbolic foods.

One contemporary rabbi, Jill Jacobs, adds:

“During the seder, we don’t just tell the story of the Exodus, we see, smell, feel and taste liberation.”

Wine

In Jewish tradition, wine is a symbol of joy. It is used to sanctify rituals, mark special moments and sweeten holiday celebrations. At the Passover seder we drink four cups of wine (or grape juice) corresponding to the four promises of redemption in the book of Exodus. When we reach the part of the seder that recalls the ten plagues, we use our pinkie fingers to take drops of wine out of our glasses. This symbolizes that our joy is decreased when people suffer, even if those people are our enemies. There is an additional cup of wine on the table for Elijah the Prophet who, tradition tells us, “visits” each seder on Passover. A modern addition is a cup of wine for Miriam to honor her role in bringing about the liberation.

Matzah

Matzah is a flat piece of bread that resembles a large cracker. It is called “the bread of our affliction” and was eaten by the Israelites during their time in slavery. Matzah also reminds us of the unleavened bread that didn’t have time to rise during the Israelites’ hurried departure from Egypt. There are three pieces of matzah on a covered plate at the seder table. The middle matzah is broken into two pieces and the larger piece becomes the *afikoman*. The afikoman is the seder’s dessert and the last thing eaten before the seder concludes. In some families, the seder leader hides the afikoman from the children who try to find and redeem it for a prize. In other families, the children hide the afikoman and the adults hunt for it.



During the entire Passover holiday, it is traditional to relive the Exodus story by abstaining from eating bread and other leavened products, called chametz in Hebrew. We also refrain from eating products that are fermented or can cause fermentation as well as other related foods. This is commonly known as “keeping kosher for Passover.” Each denomination of Judaism (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, etc.) has different guidelines for observing this tradition. A quick Internet search provides ample details.

For those keeping kosher for Passover, preparation for the holiday includes getting rid of all chametz in one’s home, car, office, etc. All dishes and utensils that come into contact with chametz throughout the year are put away during Passover. Kitchen appliances and counters are either cleaned in a particular way or they are covered. Leavened products can be donated or they can be composted if they are not appropriate for donation. Chametz can be stored if it is symbolically sold for the duration of the holiday so that ownership is transferred. Contact a rabbi or Jewish educator in your community if you are interested in symbolically selling your chametz or you would like guidance in other Passover observances.

Passover is a time for spiritual and physical “spring cleaning.” Yeast rises, causing food to become puffed

up and full of air, much like a person’s ego can become. Passover offers an opportunity for introspection and reflection on our lives as we engage in the ritual of eating only simple, unleavened foods.

Bedikat Chametz, the search for any remaining chametz, takes place the night before Passover begins. The lights around the house are turned off and a candle is lit (or a flashlight is turned on). Traditionally, a feather and wooden spoon are used during the search and whenever chametz is found, the feather sweeps it onto the wooden spoon, which is then used to place the chametz in a paper bag. To ensure that the search is not in vain, small bits of chametz (typically 10) are planted around the house. This ritual scavenger hunt is particularly fun for children who can either do the chametz hiding or the seeking. Make sure to write down the hiding places! It is customary to burn these and any other remaining bits of chametz the next morning, though other means of disposal are used as well.

The Seder Plate

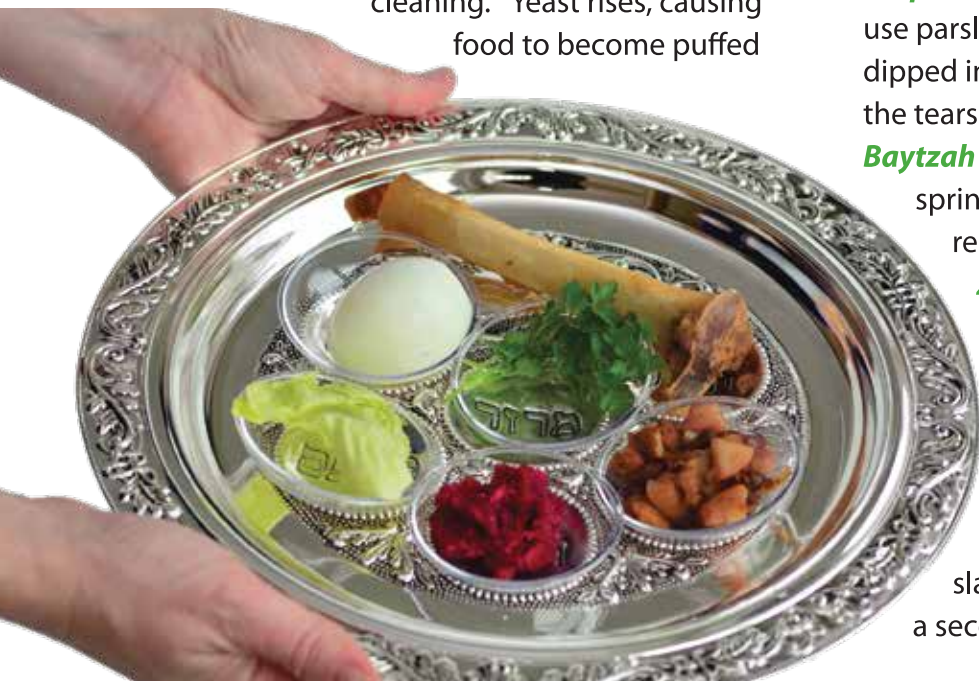
Charoset - a chunky fruit and nut spread that reminds us of the mortar the Israelites used in their hard labor making brick for pyramids and other buildings in Egypt.

Karpas - a vegetable that symbolizes rebirth. Some use parsley, onion, celery or potato. The karpas is dipped into salt water during the seder to recall the tears of the slaves in bondage.

Baytzah - a roasted egg that reminds us of springtime, of life, and of nature’s cycle of rebirth and renewal.

Zro’ah - a roasted lamb shankbone that symbolizes the Passover sacrifice that was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. Vegetarians often substitute red beets.

Maror - a bitter herb such as horseradish represents the bitterness and suffering of slavery. Some seder plates have a place for a second bitter herb called chazeret.



The Haggadah

The *haggadah*, literally “telling,” is a booklet that guides us through the steps of the Passover seder. As Robert Goodman explains, “It is a masterpiece of pedagogy. It uses many effective and affective learning techniques, employing the Socratic method of questions and answers, storytelling, show and tell, song, play, food... suspense (will Elijah appear?), pathos (plagues), and more. It is especially structured to involve children meaningfully and to hold their interest by carefully integrating activities for them.”

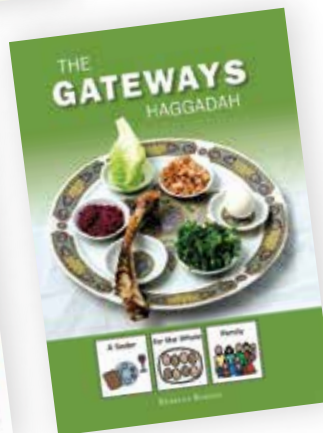
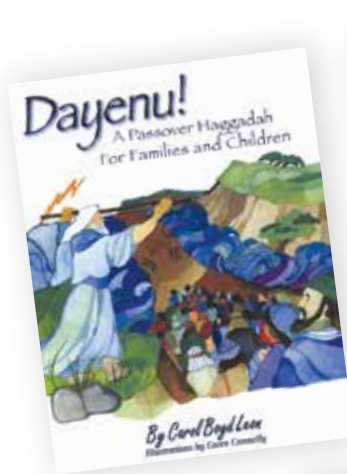
Most *haggadot* (plural of haggadah) include instructions for setting the table as well as the songs, blessings, rituals and stories that make up the Passover seder. All haggadot include the same 15 steps, though some provide

condensed versions of the traditional text. The seder is designed to encourage curiosity, questions, discussion and commentary! Highlights include exploring the items on the seder plate, the *Mah Nishtanah* (The Four Questions, usually recited by the youngest child who is able), The Four Children, The 10 Plagues, *Dayenu* (a song of praise), and opening the door for Elijah the Prophet.

It is estimated that over 2,000 versions of the haggadah have been published. There are many for English speakers including those geared specifically to children. Depending on the age range of the children at the seder, you may want to have a few different haggadot available. They can be found at your local Judaica store, online, and sometimes at public libraries.

We recommend the following:

- › *Dayenu!: A Passover Haggadah for Families and Children* by Carol Boyd Leon
- › *Sammy Spider's First Haggadah* by Sylvia A. Rouss
- › *My Very Own Haggadah* by Sally Springer
- › *Richard Codor's Joyous Haggadah* by Richard and Liora Codor
- › *The Gateways Haggadah* by Rebecca Redner
- › At www.haggadot.com, you can create your own haggadah.
- › A haggadah for 4-5 year olds can be found here:
<http://tinyurl.com/ReformTotHaggadah>



Seder Suggestions

Our central task at the seder is to retell and relive the story in a way that will be meaningful for everyone around the table, especially the children. Here are some ideas to help keep them engaged throughout the evening:

Teach children about Passover and the seder ahead of time so that they can understand what is happening and can contribute their knowledge. There are countless Passover crafts projects, books, and videos that can be used in the weeks leading up to the holiday.

Involve children in preparations: cleaning the house, cooking the meal, setting the table, arranging items on the seder plate and making place cards.

Feed your children before the seder so that they don't get hungry and impatient before it's time for the meal. Have snacks and water available throughout the evening.

Ask guests to bring an item they'd like to share and discuss that symbolizes Passover themes such as freedom, spring, rebirth, or oppression.

Search online for toys, masks or finger puppets representing the plagues, or make your own.

Hang sheets to make a tent and conduct the first part of the seder on the floor. Use pillows, tapestries and a low table to pretend you're in the desert.



Contact your guests a week or more before Passover and invite them to choose a part of the seder they'd like to lead.

Add small toys or fidgets to the table.

Provide blocks or other items that kids can use to build pyramids. Use Legos to build characters or props from the story of the Exodus. Search online and print images in advance.

Put children in charge of any parts of the seder they can manage.

For example, have them:

- Walk around with a bowl, cup and towel during hand washing
- Pass out vegetables or distribute the salt water for karpas
- Refill wine (or grape juice) before each new cup
- Act out the story of the Exodus from Egypt
- Lead songs or blessings
- Open the door for Elijah.

Buy or make placemats with pictures of each step of the seder and have children place a small object on each step as it is completed. Alternatively, create a large poster showing the steps

and have children take turns placing stickers as steps are completed.





Encourage each person to ask a 5th question

after the Four Questions are recited. What is something they are wondering about Passover or the seder?

Ask attendees to identify and discuss a modern day plague

that afflicts our world, in addition to slavery. Examples are homelessness, hunger, discrimination, violence, and destruction of the environment. Young children may share personal difficulties such as feeling excluded or friends not playing fairly.

Make signs that say “Dayenu!” for kids to wave while it is sung.

After Dayenu, **invite guests to share words of gratitude** for small or large blessings in their lives.

After reading about the Israelites’ hurried departure, **ask each person at the seder to choose 2 or 3 modern day items** they would bring if packing for 40 years in the desert.

Use two large pieces of blue fabric (or sheets) to reenact the splitting of the Red Sea. Have the adults hold up the fabric as if the waters have parted while the children journey through to dry land.

After crossing the Red Sea, Miriam led the women in song and dance with tambourines.

Ask attendees which musicians or music most inspires them.

Provide robes, towels, scarves or other items for costumes. Have children (and/or adults!) dress up and act out the Passover story after it’s read in the haggadah.

Play Passover charades. Children can write (or help write) cards before guests arrive.

Set up a comfortable area with Passover books, games and puzzles for kids who need a break from sitting at the table.

Passover Recipes

Ashkenazi Charoset makes 3 Cups

8 peeled apples, coarsely chopped
2/3 cup chopped almonds
3 tablespoons sugar, or to taste
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 lemon ring, grated
4 tablespoons sweet red wine or grape juice

- Combine all, mixing thoroughly.
- Other popular ingredients in Ashkenazi Charoset include walnuts, ground ginger, brown sugar and honey. Experiment!

Sephardic Charoset makes 4 Cups

20 pitted dates, preferably Medjool
3 bananas
½ cup golden raisins
¼ cup sweet red wine
3 tablespoons date syrup (silan) or honey
½ cup walnut halves, toasted
½ cup unsalted shelled pistachio nuts
(not dyed red), toasted
½ cup whole almonds, toasted
1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cloves

In food processor, purée dates until smooth. Add bananas, raisins, wine, and date syrup and process to combine. Add walnuts, pistachios, almonds, cinnamon, allspice, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves and process until smooth. Store, covered, at room temperature until ready to serve.

Matzah Brie (pronounced “Bry”)

Matzah Brie can be made with a wide variety of ingredients. This is the most basic recipe.

2 sheets of matzah (preferably whole wheat)
2 large eggs
Salt and pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

- Break matzah into ½" pieces and place in a medium bowl.
- Cover with very hot tap water and let stand for about 30 seconds, then drain.
- Beat eggs in another medium bowl, season with salt and pepper.
- Add drained matzah and mix until combined and a wet batter forms.
- Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
- Spoon scant ¼-cupfuls of batter into skillet, making 4 pancakes. Fry, turning once, until golden and just cooked through, about 1 minute per side.
- Serve with jam, syrup or other toppings.



Matzah Ball Soup serves 4

4 large eggs, beaten
¼ cup seltzer or water
(seltzer makes them more light/airy)
¼ cup schmaltz (rendered chicken fat)
or neutral oil like vegetable or canola oil
(neutral oils will not add flavor)
1 cup matzo meal
1/8 to 1 teaspoon baking powder
(optional, makes them more light/airy)
1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper
3 quarts Homemade chicken stock, divided
Finely diced carrot and celery, for garnish
2 fresh dill sprigs plus more for garnish

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine eggs with water/seltzer and schmaltz/oil. In a small bowl, stir together matzah meal with baking powder (if using), salt, and pepper. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients and stir to combine thoroughly. Refrigerate uncovered for 30 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, divide stock evenly between two pots, season both with salt, and bring to a simmer. Add diced carrots and celery and dill sprigs to one pot and simmer until just tender; discard dill sprigs and keep warm.

3. Using wet hands, and re-wetting hands as necessary, form matzah-ball mixture into 1- to 1 1/2-inch balls, and add to simmering pot of stock that doesn't have the carrots and celery. When all

matzah balls are added, cover and simmer until matzah balls are cooked through, 1 hour. Cooked matzah balls can be kept warm in their broth until ready to serve.

4. Using a slotted spoon, transfer matzah balls to serving bowls (you should have at least 3 per bowl); strain matzah-ball-cooking broth and save for another use. Ladle hot clear broth with carrots and celery into each bowl and garnish with dill springs. Serve.

