AFIKOMEN MAMBO

Written by Joe Black
Illustrated by Linda Prater

Rabbi Joe Black's lyrics set a joyful tone and build anticipation for the Passover seder and the traditional, joyful hunt for the afikomen. (The book has an accompanying CD.)

All around the globe each year in March or April, Jewish people commemorate Passover, a holiday dedicated to freedom. This annual remembrance of the ancient Israelites' freedom from slavery in Egypt is celebrated in large part by the *seder* (from Hebrew, meaning "order"), a scripted, festive meal. An essential goal of each Passover seder is to pass on the narrative and meaning of the holiday to the next generation.

Many aspects of the seder are intended to involve and hold the interest of children; among these are the practices surrounding the *afikomen* (from Greek, meaning "dessert" or "that which comes after"). The afikomen is a piece of matzah set aside early in the evening's celebration; without it, the seder cannot officially end. Traditionally, an adult hides the afikomen for the children to find. Alternatively, the children "steal" the matzah and hold it for "ransom." In either case, a small reward is usually given.

PREPARING FOR PASSOVER

In the days leading up to Passover, use Rabbi Joe Black's lyrics to set a joyful tone and build anticipation for the upcoming seder and its afikomen hunt. Before the seder, make written and/or picture clues that give hints to the location of the afikomen. Pair younger children at the seder with older ones, and make the search for the afikomen something of a "team sport." Depending on the age of the children attending the seder, make everyone a "winner" by giving a small gift to each child.

There's no need to break the bank; consider out-of-the-ordinary treats, such as an envelope of flower or vegetable seeds, a colorful homemade bookmark, or a "ticket" promising a cookie-baking session. Award the finder of the afikomen a Passover crown. Keep it for use from year to year, marking the crown with each year's winner(s) and the date.