



Read the PJ Library Book

The Littlest Levine (4's)

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Synopsis

Why is this Levine different from all other Levines? It's not easy for Hannah Levine to be the youngest in the family, but when Passover comes she gets a chance to shine. With her grandfather's help, she learns the *Mah Nishtanah* (Four Questions). When Hannah asks and then answers the Four Questions, she becomes an important teacher for the others at the table. For Hannah, being little enables her to perform a very big role—one she could not have done had she not been the littlest Levine!

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

The Four Questions - *Mah Nish-ta-nah* - מה נשתנה

Being happy with what you have - *Sa-me-ach be-chel-ko* - שמח בְּחֶלְקוֹ

[Jewish] Time and Seasons - *Ze-ma-nim u-mo-a-dim* - זְמַנִּים וּמוֹעֲדִים

The Four Questions – Mah Nishtanah. The Four Questions (also called the Mah Nishtanah) are an important part of the traditional holiday celebration, the Passover seder. The youngest participant customarily sings them. “Mah Nishtanah” are the opening words of the questions, which mean “Why is this night different [from all other nights?]” The Mah Nishtanah is brilliantly designed to engage children in the Seder and help to tell the Passover story. The Mah Nishtanah and the rituals of Pesach date back to the Mishna, Jewish oral tradition written down over 1800 years ago.

Being happy with what you have - Same'ach b'chelko. Ben Zoma, one of our great Jewish sages, said, “Who is wealthy? A person who is satisfied with what he/she has” (Pirkei Avot 4:1). Is it possible to teach our children that material objects do not necessarily measure success or happiness? Ben Zoma's teaching suggests we can acquire true riches by living a contented life according to our means and abilities.



Jewish Time and Seasons - The calendar we use in North America is based on the Earth's relationship to the sun. The Jewish calendar is determined by the phases of the moon. Since ancient times, Jews relied on the moon to indicate when to celebrate holidays. The three Jewish festivals in the Torah of Sukkot, Pesach (Passover) and Shavuot always begin on a full moon. These are also harvest festivals.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

**How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

In the Classroom / Centers

- ✧ **Mah Nishtanah:** Fashion Mah Nishtanah props in your **art center** to help remember the song. Affix pictures to opposite sides of an index card or draw original pictures. Use a Popsicle stick as a handle. (Pictures on the attached page are an example that you can duplicate.) Place the finished cards in your **holiday center**. (You can create a holiday center by placing themed activities in one spot.) Children may practice chanting the Mah Nishtanah with a CD recording, or invite a member of your clergy or a musical parent to make a video recording. Practicing the Mah Nishtanah can become part of your day for several weeks before the holiday.
- ✧ **Mah Nishtanah:** The number 4 is very prominent in the Passover Seder. Make up a **creative movement exercise** using the number 4. Invite each child to help add to a list of suggested movements. Do each movement 4 times. Vary the languages as well as the movements, highlighting those which reflect the Passover story. "Let's do 4 spins while counting in Hebrew. Josh suggests 4 **frog** jumps, counting in English."
- ✧ **Sameach B'Chelko:** At the start of the seder, we invite "all who are hungry" to join us. At **morning meeting**, help the children to develop the awareness that while we are happy with what we have, there are children in the world who do not have enough food to eat or homes in which to live. Consider a food drive, and talk to the children about where the collection will be donated.
- ✧ **Sameach B'Chelko:** Generate a list with your students of ways to assist the needy in the community, and brainstorm a plan for action to increase the happiness of our neighbors. This makes a great **social studies** project.
- ✧ **Jewish Time and Seasons:** Hannah's retelling of her preparations for the various Jewish holidays, provides the perfect opportunity to review the cycle of the holidays. Reinforce the importance of each family member's help and participation. Elicit ideas from children of the special jobs they do to prepare for holidays and Shabbat. Create a **job chart** of tasks for these special days.
- ✧ **Jewish Time and Seasons:** Keep track of the phases of the moon for an entire month in your **science center** with crème filled sandwich cookies. Carefully open the cookie, and using a toothpick, replicate the shape of the moon every couple of days by scraping off the appropriate amount of frosting. From new moon (frosting all removed) to full moon (no frosting removed) will take 14 days. Another 14 days and you start all over. When you've completed your observation, enjoy your moon phases as a snack.



Bridging Home and School

The Seder Moon

Tell families you are studying the phases of the moon in relationship to the Jewish calendar. Suggest that families might observe the moon and share their observations with the class. Can they guess what the moon will look like on the night of the Seder?

Four Questions Fun

Invite your families to your school Passover experience. Let them know you will be featuring the Four Questions. Suggest that each family think of a creative question and its answer to present to the group. Questions might include the following ideas: “What are the movements to Miriam’s dance?” “What does Elijah look like?” “What kind of staff did Moses carry?” “Can you demonstrate one of the plagues?” “What song might a slave sing?” “What were the sights and sounds of the Sea of Reeds parting?” Make sure to take pictures and share!



Family Engagement at Home

Kid Friendly Seder

How can each family make a Seder “kid friendly” and not overwhelming? Advanced preparation for the Seder is very helpful. Suggest that families assign parts and responsibilities to children and adults of all ages. Encourage older family members and guests to share stories and pictures of Seders and family gatherings from past events. Fill the table with props of all kinds. Put cut-up vegetables, fruit and nuts in little bowls on the table for snacking. Dress in costume, sing songs, dance - be creative!

Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about children’s understanding of the Seder. Invite children to comment on their Seders or family gatherings. You may suggest children bring in family objects or pictures from their Seder. Record their comments to share with everyone. For example: *Our big topic of discussion this week was, “What was special about your family celebration of Passover? What was your favorite part of the holiday?” Sarah brought a tambourine to class and told us, “When we talked about Miriam, my family danced around the Seder table with tambourines.” Can we all come to Sarah’s Seder next year?*

More

 resources and websites for inspiration

Mah Nishtanah- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsWh4YaD3HE>

Jewish Time and seasons <http://www.jewfaq.org/calendar.htm>

CDs of Seder melodies-Debbie Friedman-*The Journey Continues*, Paul Zim-Seder Nights, *Passover Sing Along*, Craig Taubman-*Celebrate Passover*, Cindy Paley-*A Singing Seder*, Shira Kline-*Shir-La-La Pesach*-Fran Avni-*Mostly Matza* (See Amazon.com and URJBooksandMusic.com for more ideas)





Chametz u matzah/Bread or matzah



Matzah/Only matzah



She-ar y'arakot / All vegetables



Maror / Bitter herbs



Matbilin afilu pa'am echat / Dipping or not



Sh'tei f'amim / Dip twice

**Bein yoshvin u-vein
m'subin
Sitting up or reclining**



**Kulanu m'subin
We all recline**

