

Passover Reading Guide



Children at Passover Time

There are many ways to build excitement in your children before the big event arrives. Some suggestions include:

- Make a *seder* plate with cupcake holders.
- Decorate plastic wine goblets for Elijah's and Miriam's cups.
- Chop nuts for *charoset*.
- Learn Passover songs. Perhaps the best known is "*Dayenu*" which means "It would have been enough for us." It describes all the great things God did for the Jews during the Exodus.
- Make a matching game placemat showing different parts of the *seder*. Children will be able to follow along as you progress through each section.

The *seder* is meant to be an interactive event, marked by ongoing questions and discussion among the participants. It is traditional for the youngest child to chant the *Ma Nishtanah*, or Four Questions. The internet is a great place to learn the words and music for this and *Dayenu* as well. Throughout the *seder* there are places for children to be up and moving: they can open the door to welcome Elijah and act out various plagues, such as the frogs. A highlight is always the search for the *afikoman!* It is customary for the service leader to hide this piece of *matzah* early during the *seder*, and after the meal, the children try to find it. The lucky detective usually barter with the service leader: *afikoman* for some reward. Many families provide a little something for each child at the holiday table.

If You Liked This Book, Try...

2007 PJ Library Passover titles:

What I Like About Passover by Varda Livney
This Is Passover! by Santiago Cohen
Dinosaur on Passover by Diane Levin Rauchwerger
The Matzo Ball Boy by Lisa Shulman
Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco
Matzo Ball Moon by Leslea Newman

Passover titles for children 0 to 2:

My First Passover Board Book by Claire Lister
It's Seder Time! by Latifa Berry Kropf

Passover titles for children aged 3 to 5:

This Is the Matzah by Abby Levine
Sammy Spider's First Passover by Sylvia Rouss
My Very Own Haggadah by Judyth Groner & Madeline Wikler*
Sammy Spider's First Haggadah by Sylvia A. Rouss*

Passover titles for children aged 6 to 8:

Had Gadya: a Passover Song by Seymour Chwast
The Moses Basket by Jenny Koralek
Pearl's Passover by Jane Breskin Zalben
Shlemiel Crooks by Anna Olswanger
Passover Around the World by Tami Lehman-Wilzig**
Celebrate Passover by Deborah Heiligman**
More Than Matzah by Debbie Herman & Ann Koffsky**
Wonders and Miracles by Eric Kimmel**
Why on This Night? by Rahel Musleah*
A Different Night by Noam Zion & David Dishon*

* *Haggadah*

** *Nonfiction/ activity book*

History of the Holiday

The Jewish holiday of Passover, *Pesach* in Hebrew, is the most widely celebrated holiday by today's Jewish people. It falls on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of *Nisan* (late March or April). Israeli Jews and some in the Diaspora observe the holiday for seven days, while others participate in an eight-day observance.

Passover is both agricultural and historical in origin. Also known as *Chag haAviv*, the "Festival of the Spring," it reminds us of the early spring harvest in the former land of Canaan, now Israel.

Much more commonly recognized for its historical significance, Passover is also known as *Zman Cheruteynu*, "The Season of Our Freedom." For generations rabbis and scholars have touted Passover as the birth of the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. The Passover story comes from the first half of the Book of Exodus in the Bible. In those pages we read of the Jewish people's plight under slavery in Egypt, and their subsequent escape to freedom.

Interestingly, Moses, hand-selected by God to lead the Jews to their freedom, is never referenced in the *haggadah*, the Passover text which outlines home rituals for the holiday. What is implied is the notion that all credit for the Jewish deliverance goes to God, not any human. The name Passover is symbolic of the Angel of Death "passing over" the Jewish homes while killing the first born of the Egyptians, the last of the Ten Plagues before Pharaoh let the Jews go.

Celebrating Passover

What is unique to Passover is the extensive observance of the holiday which is done at home. The key event is the "Passover *Seder*." The *seeder*, held on the first one or two nights of the holiday, consists of a festive meal, the retelling of the Exodus story, and many rituals all rich in symbolism. The guide for the *seeder* is the *haggadah*, Hebrew for "telling," which contains the texts, blessings and songs of the ceremony. Telling the story again and again, year after year, is one way of fulfilling the instruction from Exodus 13:8 "You shall tell your children on that day, saying, 'It is because of what God did for **me** when I went free out of Egypt.'" Furthermore, at the *seeder*, we read, "In each generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from *Mitzrayim* [Egypt]." In other words, in some way we are to create a sense that we, our children, our families, and our people have been given the blessing of freedom. There are a myriad of *haggadot* (plural for *haggadah*) available, many with wonderful modern interpretations and discussion points; if you are interested in having your own, search on line or in any Jewish book store until you find one that speaks to you.

Some Rituals and Traditions

- On each *seeder* table is *matzah*, a cracker-like bread substitute representing the bread that didn't have time to rise when the Jews fled Egypt. Tradition teaches that during Passover Jews refrain from eating *chametz*, food with leavening such as bread, cookies or pasta.
- Early in the *seeder* the leader takes one of the *matzot* (plural for *matzah*) and breaks it in two. One of the broken pieces becomes the *afikoman* and will be eaten later for dessert.
- Also on each table is a goblet of wine called "Elijah's Cup." Traditionally someone opens the door to wel-

come the Prophet Elijah, the one who will announce messianic times and bring the hope of peace.

- In recent times, some Jews have added a second goblet filled with water. This is known as "Miriam's Cup" and represents Miriam's well provided by God as Miriam the Prophetess, sister of Moses, cared for the Israelites during their desert journey. It also gives those at the *seeder* table an opportunity to focus on great Jewish women who have made significant contributions to the Jewish people of past and present.

Additionally, a special *seeder* plate is adorned with the following items:

- **Charoset:** we eat this combination of fruit, nuts, and wine (many recipes available!) which represents the mortar with which the Jews were forced to bind the bricks during their enslavement
- **Maror (bitter herbs):** usually horseradish, eaten to remind us of the bitterness of slavery
- **Karpas:** a green vegetable, usually parsley, as a sign of spring
- **Pesach (roasted bone):** a symbol of the Passover offering at the holy Temple
- **Betza (roasted egg):** a symbol of the Temple offering at festival time