



THE PASSOVER PARROT

Written by Evelyn Zusman
Illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker

No one wants to help Lily practice for the Four Questions – except their parrot, Hametz! Hametz gets a little too involved with the afikomen, however.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

An Odd Bird

Why is this parrot different from all other parrots? This parrot can recite the Four Questions! Known as the Mah Nishtanah in Hebrew, the Four Questions are traditionally posed by the youngest child at a Passover seder, the ritual holiday meal. The answers to these questions bring the conversation around to the story of the Exodus, when the ancient Israelites fled Egypt and left their days of slavery behind. Lily works hard to learn the Four Questions in Hebrew (and so does her parrot!). Whether you sing them or speak them, in English or Hebrew, alone or with a partner—the Four Questions are a highlight of the seder. And every question starts out the same way: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” For more on the Four Questions and Passover, visit pjlibrary.org/passoverparrot.

Not Your Ordinary Dessert

A Passover seder night is definitely different from all other nights. How many other nights do you hide food around the house for others to find? Traditionally, there are three pieces of matzah stacked on the seder plate. During the seder, the middle matzah is split in two; the smaller piece is returned to its spot between the others, but the larger piece becomes the *afikomen* (which comes from a Greek word meaning “dessert”). In many households, including Lily’s, a child steals the afikomen when no one’s looking. Another tradition is for a grown-up to hide the afikomen somewhere in the house; the kids then search for it. Whatever your family’s custom, kids will play an important role: The seder cannot be completed until the afikomen is found!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Make a Question Jar

Any family meal is a great time to encourage lively, question-filled discussion. Put together a question jar to help spur family conversations every time you and your kids sit down for dinner - no seder required.

Supplies

Glass jar with lid
Construction paper
Tape
Scissors (and grown-up help)
Blank paper and pen
Dry-erase marker

Directions:

1. Draw and then cut a question mark out of the construction paper and tape it to the side of the jar.
2. Cut the blank paper into strips.
3. Write a question on each strip of paper. Kids who aren't writing yet can draw pictures. (Need ideas? Visit thefamilydinnerproject.org for conversation starters target to age groups.)
4. Fold the strips of paper and put them in the jar. At dinnertime, each family member can choose a conversation starter from the jar and pose it to the table. Questions, anyone?

