

# Matzah Belowstairs

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## What makes us free?

### Calling All Kids

On Passover, it isn't enough to merely remember the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; we must also teach our children about it. Children are active participants in the *seder* (the ritual meal) from start to finish. The night opens with the Four Questions — and reciting them is a child's special job. Families have different fun ways of involving the kids throughout the *seder*, from rewarding questions about the Exodus with treats to acting out the Passover story. As Eli's dad points out in this book, the *seder* can't end without finding the *afikomen*, a special piece of matzah that is hidden during the meal. This is also often the domain of the little ones, who race to find the hidden matzah. So, call kids to the table! This night is about them. To learn more visit [pjlibrary.org/matzahbelowstairs](http://pjlibrary.org/matzahbelowstairs).

### Hungry? Come and Eat!

In this story, Miriam Mouse and her family are out of matzah — and almost out of time. A passage in the *Haggadah*, the traditional *seder* text, speaks to this very situation: "All who are hungry, come and eat." There is a centuries-old tradition in Jewish communities of donating generously before the holiday to *ma'ot chitim* — "wheat funds" that enable the poor to purchase matzah. In more recent times, giving has been expanded to cover the costs of holiday food, festive clothing, and other provisions. When Eli shares his family's *afikomen* with Miriam, he shows that being free doesn't mean that you just look to your own needs. It's about ensuring that those around you are cared for, too.

### Getting Personal

The story of Passover happened long, long ago, but it's still relevant today. The *Haggadah* tells us to see ourselves as having personally come out of Egypt. Miriam gets in the spirit at the end of this book by dressing as an Israelite to present a thank-you gift to Eli. This dress-up fun is reminiscent of an old custom in the Sephardic (Middle Eastern or Spanish) tradition. Early in the *seder*, a grown-up dresses as an Israelite and stands at the front door. Children call out, "Where are you coming from?" The "visitor" answers, "Egypt." "And where are you going?" the children ask, and the answer is: "I'm heading to Jerusalem!" This role-playing game is a reminder that while our traditions have ancient origins, they are also for every generation. All we have to do is put ourselves into the ongoing story.

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**W**hat special jobs do you do to get ready for Passover?

**W**hy did our ancestors (human or mouse!) eat matzah?

**H**ow do you feel when you share with someone?

## MATZAH BELOWSTAIRS



## HANDS ON!



## Make Your Own Afikomen Bag

When it's time to hide the *afikomen* at your next *seder*, slip it into this special bag first. It might make it easier to find!

### Supplies:

Zippered plastic bag  
Decorative duct tape  
Stickers (optional)  
Markers



Use strips of decorative duct tape to cover the outside of the plastic bag. Write "Afikomen" in marker, then enhance with a few stickers (if desired). Now your *afikomen* bag is ready for some matzah and for a game of hide-and-seek.