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What's worth rushing for?

Rush Hour

Engineer Ari is used to moving at a quick pace. As an engineer, he keeps a tight schedule. But today he's extra hurried: he's shopping for Passover and trying to get home lickety-split for the seder (ritual meal). All this rushing might remind us of when the Israelites were enslaved in ancient Egypt. It took a long time to convince the wicked Pharaoh to let them go, but once he did, the Israelites had to move fast. Their bread had no time to rise, becoming that flat, crunchy bread we know and love: matzah! That's why matzah is made in a rush; it must be baked within 18 minutes. That's a lot of rushing! But when the seder comes, it's time to stop, lean back, and revel in the freedom. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/engineeraripassoverrush.

A Full Plate

In Judaism, we take things personally, so to speak. We see ourselves not just as observing historical events, but as part of the story itself. The Haggadah (the text used at the Passover seder) says, "In every generation we should see ourselves as though we personally have gone out of Egypt." The foods Engineer Ari collects for the seder plate are meant to evoke our ancestors' experience. For example, vegetables dipped in salt water remind us of our ancestors' tears; charoset, a mixture of fruits and nuts, represents the mortar the slaves used; and bitter herbs reflect the bitterness of their lives. When we imagine our ancestors' experiences, it helps us to appreciate our own freedom.

Together in Spirit

There's something amazing about a bunch of people all doing the same thing at the same time. On Passover, Jews all around the world, of every background, get together with friends and family on the same day and tell the same story of freedom. That story really is about togetherness: the Jews endured slavery in Egypt together, hurried out of Egypt together, and crossed through the Red Sea to freedom together. Ari's Passover is also about togetherness -- gathering items for the seder is a group effort, and Ari will celebrate the seder with Jessie and Nathaniel . . . if he can stay awake.

HANDS ON!

Make Your Own Seder Plate

A big part of getting ready for Passover is gathering all the items for the seder plate, just as Ari does in this story. One way to handle it is to make them yourself!

Supplies:

- Paper plate
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Pictures of seder plate items
- Decorative items like stickers, beads, glitter, etc.

Gather small pictures of the six seder plate items: shankbone, egg, horseradish, charoset, and two kinds of greens. (You can draw them yourself, or find some images online and print them.) Glue the picture to the paper plate, arranged any way you like. Decorate your seder plate with markers, stickers, glitter, and anything else that makes it colorful and fun. You're ready for the seder, no rush necessary!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHAT are some foods that the friends share in this book? What Passover foods would you like to share with a friend?

LOOK at the illustrations showing Ari at the matzah factory. What are some of the steps of making matzah? Would you like to work in a matzah factory?

THIS story takes place in Israel more than a hundred years ago. What do you notice about Israel and the people who lived there long ago?