



Getting Ready for Passover



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Preparing for Passover

Pesach (Passover) is a wonderful time to involve your family in Jewish activities.

There are so many opportunities to foster a sense of Jewish identity: There is an exciting story to tell and lots to do. Activities that anticipate the holiday can generate excitement and add to the family's appreciation and enjoyment of the actual Passover Seder. Preparation for the holiday is very important: cleaning the house, cooking the food, reading up about the holiday, etc. We can take advantage of this incredible opportunity to create lasting Jewish memories!

A Passover Seder can get long and (yes, believe it or not) boring - especially for children. The ideas here are for families to do together at home to liven up your Seder, create a sense of excitement for kids and children, and to review the basics of the Passover story.

The best way to learn about and begin to prepare for Passover is to share the story with your family. A good and short version of the story can be found on The Union for Reform Judaism website: <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/passover/passover-story>

>> [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) has a large selection of Passover books for families and children of all ages that are available for e-readers.

As part of the preparation for the holiday of Passover, most Jewish families do a thorough cleaning of their home. This tradition comes from the custom of not eating or owning any leavened bread (chametz) or any bread products on Passover. We only eat unleavened bread (matzah), so we clean our homes and search for any crumbs that we may have overlooked.

Bedikat chametz, or "the hunt for chametz," is a wonderful ritual to try out with your family the night before Passover. Anyone can do this ritual...and it's lots of fun. Basically you hide little packets of bread or cheerios or whatever chametz you may have on hand. Then play a game of hide and seek for the kids to find the chametz. Some families even do the hide and seek part in the dark with a candle. The next day you get to burn your packets of chametz! Happy hunting!

Passover Activities

Make a Seder Plate together. Color and cut out the picture of the Seder plate found at the end of this article. Then glue the plate under a clear glass or plastic plate. Voila! You have a one-of-a-kind *Seder plate* for your *Seder*. Here's what goes on the Seder plate:

- **Maror (bitter herbs)** - usually horseradish, which is a reminder of the bitter lives of the Hebrew slaves
- **Chazeret (bitter herbs)** - usually romaine lettuce, which is also symbolic of the bitterness of life in Egypt
- **Karpas (greens, usually parsley)** - represents the spring season in which Passover takes place
- **Beitzah (roasted egg)** - represents the Passover offering of ancient days, as well as the wholeness and continuing cycle of life
- **Zeroa (shank bone)** - symbolizes the lamb that was sacrificed in ancient days
- **Charoset (sweet mixture)** - In the Ashkenazic fashion, it is a mixture of apples, nuts, sweet wine, cinnamon and sugar. In the Sephardic tradition, it is a mixture of dates, nuts and sweet wine. It reminds us of the bricks and mortar made by the Hebrew slaves

Also place on the table:

- **Three matzot (plural of matzah)** - on a plate with a cloth or napkin cover
- **Salt water** - a reminder of the tears shed by the Hebrew slaves
- **Kos Eliyahu (Cup of Elijah, filled with wine)** - symbolizes the hope for a redemptive future
- **Afikoman bag (bag for broken matzah, to hide)** - this is traditionally hidden during the *seder* for children to find in exchange for a small gift/prize

Optional Additions: along with these traditional symbols, families may choose to include:

- **Kos Miriam (Cup of Miriam)** - a special cup on the holiday table filled with water to honor Miriam, the sister of Moses, who played a vital role in the history of our people.
- **Tapuz (orange)** - many families and congregations also add an orange to the *seder* plate as a symbol of inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community and others who feel marginalized in Jewish life

Make a Miriam's Cup. You will need the following:

- Clear plastic cups
- Plastic stick on "Jewels" available at craft stores

Instructions: Let each child decorate their own cup with the jewels. They can use the cup to drink water together. Talk about the importance of water to our world. Let children water the plants with their Miriam's cups.

Make an Afikoman Bag. You will need the following:

- Tea towel or large napkin
- Ribbon
- Button
- Needle and thread (we used a sewing machine for the hems)
- Fabric pens

Instructions:

- Fold the tea towel in half, right sides together, and sew along the side and bottom to make a pouch.
- Turn the pouch so the right sides are on the outside.
- Cut a length of ribbon, fold into a loop, and sew to the middle of the open edges at the top of the bag.
- Sew a button into the middle of the other side of the bag. The ribbon can be looped over the button to close the bag.
- Decorate the bag with fabric pens and stick-on jewels.

Have Fun With Your Afikoman Bag. Choose small, age-appropriate gifts for the *afikomen* search and rescue team that kids can enjoy after dinner during your "hunt for the chametz."

Cooking at Passover

Cooking is a major activity at Pesach. Here are some unique cooking experiences to share with your family:

Design your own Charoset

Let children pick their favorite fruits; 3 or 4 types work best but you can use as many kinds as you love. Chop, or supervise chopping for older children, and put all in a bowl. Blend all together with a little grape juice (and a little sugar if you want it sweeter for your very own special family Charoset.

Making Matzah Balls

Here is an easy, child friendly recipe for Matzah Ball Soup. You will need the following ingredients:

- ½ cup *matzah* meal
- ¼ cup water
- 2 eggs
- 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- Salt (to taste)
- Low sodium chicken or vegetable broth (for soup)
- Chopped carrots, celery (for soup)

Instructions: Beat the eggs lightly with a fork. Add the water, oil and salt. Mix well. Add the *matzah* meal and stir thoroughly. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Let children wash hands and each make a ball. In the meantime, boil water in a pot safely away from the children. Add balls to salted boiling water, cover and cook for about 1/2 hour.

For Matzah Ball Soup: Use low sodium chicken or vegetable broth as the base for the soup. Add chopped carrots and celery, cook to soften, then add *matzah* balls.

Activities During the Seder

Here are some suggested activities to intersperse at the right time during the Seder story:

- Make costumes! Have children (or everyone) dress in biblical costumes using things you have around the house (bath robes, pillow slips, towels, scarves for headwear - be creative!);
- Adapt puppets to portray Pharaoh, Moses, Aaron and Miriam for dramatic play during the telling of the story;
- Have dishes of Legos or extra pieces of matzah to use to build pyramids.

After the Four Questions. After the Four Questions, the Haggadah turns to the Four Children. At this point, turn to the children sitting at your table and ask them to add a fifth question. The leader of the Seder can give a small prize to the children for asking “such good questions.”

Packing to leave Egypt. Families love this activity! Have a suitcase ready for packing and let each child choose the things they would take if they were going to move away very quickly and had to decide really fast. A variation is to let each participant pick the one most important thing that cannot be left behind.

The Ten Plagues. There have been many attempts to dramatize the plagues to keep children’s attention during the *Seder*. Here is a list of the plagues with an activity for each:

1. **BLOOD** - everybody put on a band aid.
2. **FROGS** - everybody jump and croak like a frog.
3. **LICE** - everybody scratch their heads.
4. **WILD BEASTS** - everybody howl like a beast.
5. **CATTLE DISEASE** - everybody moo like a sick cow.
6. **BOILS** - everybody pinch your arm and hold it.
7. **HAIL** - twirl your fingers atop your head like hail falling from the sky.
8. **LOCUSTS** - buzz around like a swarm.
9. **DARKNESS** - shut the lights, close your eyes, squeeze Mommy or Daddy's hand.
10. **DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN** - everybody gives a big hug. God protected the Jewish babies from this plague and kept them *safe*.

The Passover Haggadah

You will need a Haggadah for your Seder. *Haggadah* means “telling” in Hebrew. It is a written guide to the Passover *seder*. The *Haggadah* includes various prayers, blessings, rituals, fables, songs and information for how the *Seder* should be performed. The Haggadah Online Library is a site that has *Haggadot* of all kinds for every family or group to download and print:

<https://www.haggadot.com/clip-search>

The word *Seder* means “order.” There is a special order to the parts of the *Seder*. There are 15 parts to the *Seder* service. All of the *Seder* service and liturgy can be found in the *Passover Haggadah*. Here they are:

1. **Kaddish** - A blessing is recited over wine in honor of the holiday. The wine is then drunk and a second cup is poured.
2. **Urchatz** - Participants wash their hands without a blessing in preparation for eating the *Karpas*.
3. **Karpas** - A vegetable (typically parsley, celery, or potato) is dipped into salt water and eaten. The salt water is symbolic of the tears shed by the Jews during the Egyptian slavery.
4. **Yachatz** - Three *matzot* have been set up on the *Seder* table. At *Yachatz*, the middle *matzot*, is broken in half. The larger piece is set aside as the *afikoman*, which will be eaten at *Tzafun*.
5. **Maggid** - *Maggid* is the bulk of the *Haggadah*. It includes the retelling of the Passover story, the recital of the four questions, and drinking of the second cup of wine. Want to know more about “What’s the Deal with the *Maggid*?” Click here for more information: <https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/how-to-read-haggadah>
6. **Rachtzah** - Participants wash their hands for a second time in preparation for eating the *matzo*.
7. **Motzei** - A blessing is recited before eating *matzot*.
8. **Matzah** - Some *matzot* is eaten.
9. **Maror** - A bitter herb, or vegetable, is eaten (typically raw horseradish, endives, or romaine lettuce), symbolizing the bitterness of slavery. The bitter vegetable is dipped into *charoset*, a traditional food that combines apples, wine, nuts, and cinnamon, symbolizing the mortar for the bricks used by the slaves.
10. **Korech** - A sandwich made of *matzot* and *maror* is eaten.
11. **Shulchan Orech** - Dinner, which includes traditional Passover foods, is eaten.
12. **Tzafun** - The *matzot* that was set aside earlier, the *afikoman*, is now eaten as dessert.

13. **Bareich** - Participants recite *birkat ha-mazon* (Grace after Meals) and they drink the third cup of wine. For more information on “The Meaning of Birkat Hamazon” go to: <https://www.alephbeta.org/jewish-prayer/birkat-hamazon>
After *birkat ha-mazon* is recited and the third cup of wine has been drunk, the fourth cup is poured, as well as a cup set aside for Elijah the Prophet. Elijah is supposed to herald in the Messiah on Passover. The door is opened to invite Elijah in.
14. **Hallel** - The *Hallel* prayer, traditionally recited on festivals, is recited (and often sung) at this point. To learn more about “What is Hallel?” go to: https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4181720/jewish/What-Is-Hallel.htm
After *Hallel*, finally the fourth cup of wine is drunk.
15. **Nirtzach** - The *seder* is now completed with the wish that next year the holiday will be celebrated in Jerusalem. This is often followed by various traditional songs, hymns and stories.

Pesach Sameach! Happy Passover!

(Seder Plate cut-out is on the next page)

Passover: Color the Seder Plate!

