



Photo courtesy of Barbara Herman, Temple Beth-El,
Great Neck, NY

Passover Seder for Young Children

4-5 years

Passover is the perfect holiday to explore with 4-and 5-year-olds. They are busy pursuing and absorbing new experiences. They have developed a longer attention span and greater language skills. They are curious and eager to take on increasingly complex intellectual challenges. They are very social and love practicing roles and routines. The seder with its story telling, number significance, role playing and repetition is right up their alley. Enjoy together the interactive, interpersonal experience of retelling our story.

Part of the excitement of the seder is in the preparation. You can do the following activities with the children to get them ready for the actual seder.

- Make simple seder plates out of paper plates and markers, two clear plastic plates with the five sections glued in the middle, or any other ideas you may have.
- Make or supply simple Kiddush cups.
- Make matzah, or get it from a box and compare it to bread.
- Make a three-pocket matzah cover out of paper, felt or cloth; napkins work really well, too.
- Sing songs that teach the themes and lessons of Pesach.
- Make *charoset*; your class can try recipes from different countries.
- Have a group search for *chametz* (unleavened food forbidden on Passover).

Set the Scene

Your activity area should be big enough for all to move about but small enough to see and hear without amplification. Use child-sized tables and chairs. Children may be the “doers” of putting out the tablecloths, napkins, cups.

Each place setting should have four half cups of “wine,” a personalized/custom designed filled seder plate, a tiny cup of salt water and a piece of matzah. Anticipation is exciting at this age. Everything should be “homemade” and a product of the children’s vision and creativity.

Opening Song

(Sung to the tune of “Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel”)

Oh, welcome everybody.
Time to gather round.
We will tell the story.
We’ll smile and then we’ll frown.
Oh Pesach, Pesach, Pesach
We were slaves but now we’re free.
Oh Pesach, Pesach, Pesach
Let’s tell our history!

The Story of Passover

Reader 1

Every year we sit at a table
Fit for a king and queen.
We retell the story of our ancestors,
Who were slaves to Pharaoh, so mean.

Reader 2

The Jews they worked in Egypt.
No rest, no time to play.
They built the city, they built the palace.
Oh, how they wished to run away!

Reader 1

"We need some help," they cried to God.
God heard their cries and made a plan.
God needed a partner to lead the people.
Moses was the one who would lead the clan.

Reader 2

When Moses was born, his mommy knew
She had to save him, so her plan grew.
She used a *teva* for a boat,
And down the river Moses did float.

Reader 3

Lucky for us he was saved by Pharaoh's daughter,
When she was bathing in the water.
She found little Moses, took him into her home,
And cared for him like he was her own.

Reader 4

When Moses grew up big and strong,
He found out where he really belonged
And knew he had to make right from wrong!

Reader 1

God spoke to Moses from a bush that was burning
And told him that the tide was turning.
Moses with God's help would be
The leader who would set the Jews free!
He went to Pharaoh and made his plea,
But Pharaoh just laughed and laughed with glee.

Let My People Go (song)

When Israel was in Egypt Land...
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand...
Let my people go!



Reader 2

What do you think Pharaoh said back to him?
No, No, No, I will not let you go! (*Stamp feet*)
No, No, No, I will not let you go!
(*Everyone says with determination!*)

Take Us Out of Egypt

(*Sung to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame"*)
(*Borrowed from Ron Wolfson's The Art of Jewish Living: The Passover Seder*)

Take us out of Egypt.
Free us from slavery.
Bake us some matzot in haste.
Don't worry about flavor, give no thought
to taste.
Oh it's rush, rush, rush to the Reed Sea
If we don't cross it's a shame!
It's the 10 Plagues down and you're out
At the Pesach history game!

Reader 3

Moses tried really hard to make Pharaoh see
That his people just had to be free.
And God sent 10 plagues to strengthen the plea.
So, Pharaoh said, "You may go!
Take your people and leave today."

Reader 4

We had so little time to gather and pack our things.
We put our possessions on carts, in a basket or sack.
We hurried so fast across the parted sea.
The Jewish people at last were free.

(Have the children go around the room and name one thing that they would bring, perhaps explain why, and then pretend to put it in a bag. They could whisper it secretly to their neighbor, as well.) (Several "crossing the sea" activities could be done here, such as each participant jumping over a blue plastic streamer that two people are holding and wiggling.)

Reader 5

We have lots of fours on Pesach: Four cups of wine, four kinds of children, four names for Pesach, four questions to ask and four times Moses went to Pharaoh to ask for our freedom.

How many symbols are found on your seder plate? Count them and see.

The First Cup

My Little Seder Plate

(Sung to the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

I'm a little seder plate shiny and new.
I have special symbols to
Remind all the Jews.
Karpas is the greens that show us birth.
Maror is so bitter it tastes like a curse.
Roasted egg so round and brown and hard,
Shank bone to remind us of sacrifice to God.
Charoset is a mixture sweet and hard,
Reminds us of the slavery and bricks we would pound.
Don't forget to dip in salty water.
We've cried all the tears, and now its freedom we've found.



Reader 5

One of the four names for Pesach is *Z'man Chayrutaynu*, the Season of our Freedom. Here is where we drink the first of our four cups.

Wine is the symbol of our joy as we celebrate Pesach. Centuries ago, our ancestors heard the call of freedom. We raise our cups in gratitude to God for the freedom we live each and every day.

(All hold up their cups and say:)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei pr'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Reader 6

The *karpas* (greens) remind us of spring and the burst of beauty in nature this time of the year. The salt water we will dip the *karpas* in, is a reminder of the tears that our ancestors shed when they were still slaves.

Together we say our prayer for greens grown from the earth:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-adamah.

Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the earth.

Dip and eat the *karpas*.

(At each table, one person should break the middle matzah and hide the bigger piece.

It's the afikoman!)

The Second Cup

Reader 1

The second name for Pesach is *Chag HaPesach*, the Festival of the Paschal Lamb.

Wine is the symbol of our joy as we celebrate Pesach. Centuries ago, our ancestors worshipped God at the Temple in Jerusalem. We raise our cups for the second time in gratitude to God for the freedom to worship and live as Jews.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei pr'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

The Four Questions

Reader 2

An important tradition during our seder is the asking of the four questions. Let's see if we can sing them in Hebrew, translate them in English and answer them in our own words!

Reader 2

Our tradition tells us that we each should ask our own questions each year. What question would you ask? Look to the person closest to you and talk about a burning question you have. What questions do you think about often and still don't have answers to? (*Wait a few minutes*)

Reader 3

Would anyone like to ask his or her question aloud? Perhaps others have the same questions as you.

Perhaps one of us has an answer! (*Give an opportunity for exchange*)

Grownup 1

Why is the night of Passover different from all other nights?

Grownup 2

On all other nights, we eat either *chametz* (all different kinds of food) or matzah.

Why on this night do we only eat matzah?

Grownup 3

On all other nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables.

Why on this night must we eat bitter herbs?

Grownup 4

On all other nights, we do not usually dip vegetables even once.

Why on this night, do we dip twice?

Grownup 5

On all other nights, we eat in an ordinary manner.

Why on this night do we dine with special ceremony?

The 10 Plagues

1. Blood (Put on a bandage)
2. Frogs (Jump and croak like a frog)
3. Lice (Scratch your head)
4. Flies/Wild Beasts (Howl like a beast)
5. Cattle Disease (Moo like a sick cow)
6. Boils (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 (Turn out the lights, close your eyes and squeeze Mommy or Daddy's hand)
10. Death of the Firstborn (Give a moment of stillness and silence)



The Third Cup

Reader 3

The third name for Pesach is *Chag HaMatzot*, the Festival of Matzah.

Wine is the symbol of our joy as we celebrate Pesach. Centuries ago our ancestors fled Egypt so quickly; the dough did not have time to rise to bake bread. We raise our cups for the third time in gratitude to God for providing food and water and shelter during difficult times.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei pr'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

The Fourth Cup

Reader 4

The fourth name for Pesach is *Chag Ha-Aviv*, the Festival of Spring.

Wine is the symbol of our joy as we celebrate Pesach. For many centuries, God has provided nature as a partner with people for nourishment and health, here on earth.

We raise our cups in gratitude to God for the beauty and nourishment of nature.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei pr'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

(The following song could be sung while the children do a crossing the Sea of Reeds activity as indicated previously.)

Passover Song

(Sung to the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush")

This is the way we mixed the clay,
We mixed the clay, we mixed the clay.
And worked and worked the whole long day,
And made the bricks in Egypt.
This is the way we groaned and sighed,
We groaned and sighed, we groaned and sighed.
We groaned and sighed, we moaned and cried
When we were slaves in Egypt.
This is the way that Moses came,
That Moses came, that Moses came.
And spoke to us in God's own name
When we were slaves in Egypt.
This is the way so just and sad,
So just and sad, so just and sad.
That Moses punished Pharaoh bad,
To let us go from Egypt.
This is the way we left the land,
We left the land, we left the land.

And marched away to the Promised Land,
No longer slaves in Egypt.
This is the way we crossed the sea,
We crossed the sea, we crossed the sea.
And thanks to God who set us free,
No longer slaves in Egypt!

Motzi Matzah

This is the one time when we have to eat matzah.

We say the blessing for bread—*HaMotzi*—and then a special prayer that starts just like the first but ends, "*al achilat matzah*."

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, hamotzi lechem min haaretz.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who brings forth bread from the earth.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu
b'mitzvotav, vitzivanu **al achilat matzah**.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all,
who hallows us with *mitzvot*, commanding us to eat matzah.



Maror

Now we remember the hard work our ancestors did as slaves by eating something bitter. (*For this age group, it can be a bitter lettuce such as endive.*)

Korech

We can make a sandwich like Hillel did a long time ago by putting some of our bitter herb along with some sweet *charoset* between two pieces of matzah. (*Make your sandwich and eat it!*)

Reader 1

Our seder is coming to an end soon. We have remembered a lot and told an important story. We've smelled and tasted special foods and drink, and we've learned how God has helped us throughout our history.

Reader 2

If God had just taken us out of Egyptian slavery,
It would have been enough. (*Group repeats*)
If God had given us the Torah,
it would have been enough. (*Group repeats*)
If God had given us Shabbat,
It would have been enough. (*Group repeats*)
If God had given us Jerusalem,
It would have been enough. (*Group repeats*)

"Dayenu"

I-lu ho-tzi ho-tzi-anu Ho-tzi a-nu mi-mitzrayim (Repeat) Dayenu! Day, day-enu
(Repeat three times) Dayenu, dayenu
I-lu na-tan na-tan la-nu
Na-tan lan-nu et ha-Shabbat (Repeat)
Dayenu! I-lu na-tan na-tan la-nu Na-tan la-nu et ha-Torah (Repeat)
Dayenu! How thankful must we be to God For all the good God did for us!

Reader 3

Now we finish our seder! We remember the story of our people's exodus from Egypt, from slavery to freedom.

Reader 4

We were slaves in Egypt and that is why we try really hard to make sure that no people are slaves today.

We want everyone to be able to live happy, safe lives everywhere in the world. Everywhere in the world we fight for freedom.

Reader 5

And we hope for peace throughout the world and in Israel and that people from the four corners of the world will join together in Israel.

Am Yisrael

Am yisrael am yisrael am yisrael chai

(Repeat four times)

Od avinu chai HEY! Od avinu chai HEY! Od avinu, Od avinu, Od avinu, chai!

Parachute Activity

One way of physically understanding the concept of bringing people together from the four corners of the world is to bring the group together from four corners of the room. You can start off in four corners and then run together to the center of the room where a parachute is lying on the ground. Everybody picks up an edge of the parachute, and all proceed to walk in a circle, pulling the parachute up in the air and back down again.

Additional Activities

- An *afikoman* search around each table can be done if the *afikoman* was hidden during the seder; this can be a large group activity.
- Someone can open the door for Elijah, and his song can be sung.
- Talk about the different numbers that come up in the seder: four (e.g., four questions, four children, four times Moses went to Pharaoh), ten (i.e., plagues).
- Make a Magid wall mural.
- Count the Omer (the days between Passover and Shavuot).



Supplies Needed

- Handmade seder plates and Kiddush cups designed by and for each child. If all children have their own seder plate and “wine,” then they are self-sufficient and need not be dependant on a grown-up for every little thing. This also keeps everybody’s hands and germs on one’s own foods rather than each other’s.
- Child-sized tables, chairs, tablecloths, plates, napkins, plastic ware, drinking cups of water, bowls of salt water, *Kiddush* cup pre-poured with grape juice, extra juice ready and close by for refills.
- Portable microphone, if appropriate.
- Ceremonial foods: hardboiled eggs, roasted egg, roasted lamb shank, greens and parsley, *charoset*, horseradish (mild).
- Matzah and matzah cover for every table.
- Empty suitcases or bags for packing and “leaving” Egypt.
- Long blue and green streamers for pretend sea to cross.
- Adhesive bandages for the blood plague.
- Pens, pencils, markers and crayons.