

# TELL IT TO THE CHILDREN

## OUR JEWISH YEAR SESSION 5: PASSOVER

### BIG QUESTIONS FOR THIS SESSION:

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“Tell it to the children,” we are told. What is “it?” “It” is Passover, the story of our slavery in Egypt, and of going forth to become a free people. Why do we need to tell and retell this story? How can we tell it in new ways? And, thousands of years later, what does this story mean to us today?

### BEFORE THE SESSION:

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Read Abby Pogrebin’s chapters on Passover in *My Jewish Year*, pp. 174-194. If you have limited time, and need a refresher on the Passover story, see pp. 180-181.

Before the session, each member should choose one part of the seder (listed below) and bring a text that resonates with that section. Texts can be drawn from the Haggadah, other books, music, secular or sacred poetry; any source that grabs you. For more on the parts of the seder, see the Union for Reform Judaism (<https://reformjudaism.org/what-expect-passover-seder>) or Jewish Federation ([http://jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday\\_images/39497.pdf](http://jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday_images/39497.pdf)).

**Kadesh:** The Kiddush blessing and lighting holiday candles

**Urchatz:** Ritual handwashing (not included in all Reform Haggadot)

**Karpas:** Eating a vegetable (often parsley) dipped in saltwater

**Yachatz:** Breaking of the middle matzah, the afikomen

**Maggid:** The telling of the story of the Exodus from Egypt, including the Four Questions (*Mah Nishtanah*) and the Four Children

**Rachtzah:** Second ritual handwashing

**Motzi:** The blessing before eating (leavened or unleavened) bread

**Matzah:** A special blessing before eating matzah

**Maror:** Eating the bitter herbs

**Korech:** Eating two matzah sandwiches—one with only bitter herbs and one with bitter herbs and charoset

**Shulchan Orech:** Eating the festival meal

**Tzafun:** Finding and eating the afikomen

**Barech:** Birkat HaMazon, the grace after meals

**Hallel:** Psalms of praise, read or sung

**Nirtzah:** A prayer that God accept our service; concluding with the words "*l'shana haba'a b'irushalayim*" (Next year in Jerusalem)!

## MATERIALS:

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Pens/pencils/markers

## PURIM: REFLECTING ON YOUR PRACTICE (10:00)

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1. Did you decide to celebrate Purim this year? How did you choose to celebrate?
2. Did you think about Purim differently after our conversation? What changed for you?

## OPENING ACTIVITY: DAYEINU! (20:00)

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*"Dayeinu," one of the favorite refrains of Passover, means "it would have been enough for us." The song counts our blessings, acknowledging that:*

Had God brought us out of Egypt and not divided the sea for us, Dayeinu!

Had God divided the sea and not permitted us to cross on dry land, Dayeinu!

Had God permitted us to cross on dry land and not sustained us forty years in the desert, Dayeinu!

Had God sustained us forty years in the desert and not fed us with manna, Dayeinu!

Had God fed us with manna and not given us the Sabbath, Dayeinu!

Had God given us the Sabbath and not brought us to Mount Sinai, Dayeinu!

Had God brought us to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah, Dayeinu!

Had God given us the Torah and not led us into the land of Israel, Dayeinu!

Had God led us into the land of Israel and not built for us the Temple, Dayeinu!

Had God built for us the Temple and not sent us prophets of truth, Dayeinu!

Had God sent us prophets of truth and not made us a holy people, Dayeinu!

As Abby Pogrebin writes,

“...any one of these gifts would have sufficed. But there was always more. And then more. ...How many times have we focused on what we have instead of what we want? It may be a well-trodden idea these days, that noticing blessings makes you realize you are blessed. But so many times this year I have been reminded to focus on what’s in my hands rather than what’s out of reach.” (Page 190)

*Dayeinu is a list of our communal blessings. What are the personal blessings, or miracles, we have experienced over the course of our lives? Please take a few minutes to consider what the core blessings of your life have been:*

Had \_\_\_\_\_  
and not \_\_\_\_\_, it would have been enough.

Had \_\_\_\_\_  
and not \_\_\_\_\_, it would have been enough.

Had \_\_\_\_\_  
and not \_\_\_\_\_, it would have been enough.

Had \_\_\_\_\_  
and not \_\_\_\_\_, it would have been enough.

Had \_\_\_\_\_  
and not \_\_\_\_\_, it would have been enough.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*Once everyone has their own Dayeinu list, take a few minutes to discuss your answers:*

1. How did you choose the blessings you included?
2. Did you list your blessings in chronological order, like the original Dayeinu? Or did you list your blessings in order of importance or magnitude?

**PASSOVER (פסח): DIVING INTO OUR TRADITION (10:00)**

*Passover is the most celebrated Jewish holiday in the United States, according to the 2013 Pew study. The study found that 70% of American Jews celebrate the holiday by attending or hosting a seder. Why is Passover so important to us? My Jewish Year offers us several suggestions:*

- 1) “The Four Questions are asked to put the children in the spotlight and remind all the adults, too, that our tradition is a religion that requires deep probing and asking of penetrating questions. And to make our Judaism alive to those questions.” (Rabbi Rick Jacobs, quoted on page 175)
- 2) “The Torah repeats and repeats: *Tell it to the children*. They’ll grow up to be the tellers. When the children disengage, we’ve failed the mitzvah.” (Page 179)
- 3) “It’s yet one more time that ritual brings my family together.” (Page 178)
- 4) “This holiday, probably more than any other, should capture what Judaism can be. A seder should amount to more than the joyful chaos of a family reunion; that can happen without Judaism. It should make Jewish kids want to be Jews. Because our heritage is spirited, intimate, binding.” (Page 185)

## DISCUSSION QUESTION:

*According to these quotes, Passover 1) teaches us how to ask questions, 2) focuses us on the importance of teaching our children, 3) brings together families, and 4) activates our Jewish heritage.*

Which of these reasons best describes why you celebrate Passover? Or do you celebrate for other reasons entirely?

## FINDING AND MAKING MEANING IN THE SEDER (30:00)

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*In this chapter, we read about the ways Abby Pogrebin enlivens her family's Passover seder. Key to bringing the story alive is telling it in a way that feels personal to each family.*

Each member has brought a reading with them, something that encapsulates one section of the seder. Take a few minutes each to share your texts.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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1. Why did you choose this text? What part of the seder does it reflect?
2. How does this text animate your experience of Passover, in a way that the traditional text of the Haggadah does not?
3. Have you used this text in your seder? Would you use it in future?

## CONCLUSION (5:00)

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*While it may seem daunting, creating your own Haggadah is a perfect way to make the Passover story personal for your family or community.*

1. Have you (or your family) ever customized your Haggadah?
2. If you were to create your own Haggadah, what would you include? What would you leave out? How would these changes affect your (and your family's) experience of Passover?

*If you choose to make your own Haggadah, there are many useful resources. The website [haggadot.com](http://haggadot.com) (mentioned by Abby Pogrebin) is one site that offers almost unlimited flexibility, providing existing readings as well as an option to drop-in or write your own. The instructions below will help you use this site successfully.*

- Visit [haggadot.com](http://haggadot.com).
- Create a username and password (do not use the Facebook option to sign in).
- Start creating a new Haggadah
- Choose a traditional or liberal template (this will include each of the traditional parts of a seder). The liberal template may be more familiar to you.
- To personalize your haggadah, you can add, remove, and change the texts in every section:
  - To change the cover images, click on the camera icons
  - To remove a provided text, click on the trash can icons

- To add a new text, click on “Add Clip” at the beginning of the section
  - In the popup window, choose “Community Clips” section
  - Any text that intrigues you, click on the star icon to save the clip
  - Go back to the Haggadah designer screen by choosing the X-icon at the top right corner of the popup window
  - Click on “Insert Clip” at the end of the section
  - In the popup window, choose “Bookmarked Clips”
  - Click on the star icon to select the clip you’d like to add to the Haggadah design
- You can even add your own, original text to your Haggadah:
  - To write a new text, click on “Add Clip” at the beginning of the section
    - In the popup window, choose “Create Clip+”
    - Write your new text
    - Make sure you SAVE this clip!
    - It can be uploaded as private or as public
    - Once your text is written, go back to the Haggadah designer screen by choosing the X-icon at the top right corner of the popup window
    - Click on “Insert Clip” at the end of the section
    - In the popup window, choose “My Clips”
    - Click on the star icon to add the clip you’ve written to the Haggadah design

*Next session will begin with a reflection on each participant’s experience of celebrating Passover. There’s no pressure to change the way you celebrate, this will simply be an opportunity to reflect back on how these discussions impacted how participants think about this holiday.*