

JEWISH GRANDPARENTS NETWORK

# Passover Discovery Kit

**For Grandparents  
and Their Families**

By Jonathan Shmidt Chapman



Welcome to your Passover Discovery Kit. This interactive guide is designed especially for grandparents and grandchildren (ages 3



to 8) to use together — either in person or at a distance. The kit offers ideas and activities to bring the holiday of Passover to life through dramatic play, imagination, and hands-on discovery. You can do all of the activities in order or choose those that are most appropriate for your family and for the ages of your grandchildren.

The Passover Discovery Kit is divided into three sections, each focused on a different aspect of the holiday:

- 1 Celebrate Passover — Customs and Rituals:** Learn how the customs of Passover illuminate the meaning of the holiday, from eating matzah and maror to searching for the afikoman.
- 2 As If You Were There — Bringing the Story of Passover to Life:** Discover the Passover story and the tradition of recounting it through the Haggadah at the seder.
- 3 In Every Generation — Connecting the Seder to Our Lives Today:** Connect the story of Passover and the rituals of the seder to your own life and explore the themes of advocating for freedom and being a fair leader.

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We'd love to hear about your experience using this kit. Send your stories and feedback to [info@jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org](mailto:info@jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org).

# 1 Celebrate Passover — Customs and Rituals

## Background to Passover

**Passover** (*Pesach* in Hebrew), one of the most significant and widely celebrated holidays in the Jewish calendar, takes place in the Hebrew month of Nisan and commemorates the story of the Israelites' Exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom.

The holiday begins with a participatory and multisensory meal called the seder as we recount the Passover story — we read the story aloud, ritually wash our hands, display different symbolic items, and eat a variety of foods that remind us of the Israelites' experience. We observe Passover for seven or eight days, depending on family or community tradition. Many people refrain from eating leavened bread throughout this time, instead consuming matzah.

The rituals of Passover invite us to make personal connections to the themes of the holiday based on the charge in the Haggadah that in every generation we should see ourselves as if we personally came out of Egypt. Today, Passover provides a way for Jewish communities to bridge our past to the present and future — reflecting on the ways that many people are still not free, resisting oppression of all kinds, and advocating for liberation for all people.



### **Grandparents can prepare for Passover by considering these questions:**

- How has your observance of Passover changed over your lifetime? What are your most memorable Passover memories?
- How can you find ways to connect to the Passover holiday with your grandchild at home or virtually, outside of community celebrations?

### **Help grandchildren get ready for Passover by using these prompts:**

- For younger children, tell the story or show a Passover object such as a seder plate. Talk about what the children notice.
- For older children, discuss what is going to be different about the Passover holiday.

Passover is rich with symbols, rituals, and activities that help us bring the holiday to life and can make it newly meaningful each year.

- **Seder:** This ritual meal consists of multiple steps, typically hosted on the first and second nights of Passover.
- **Haggadah (literally “telling”):** The Haggadah is a book that guides us through the rituals of the seder, including the retelling of the Passover story. There are hundreds of different versions of the Haggadah that include ancient and modern texts to help us make the holiday meaningful for us.

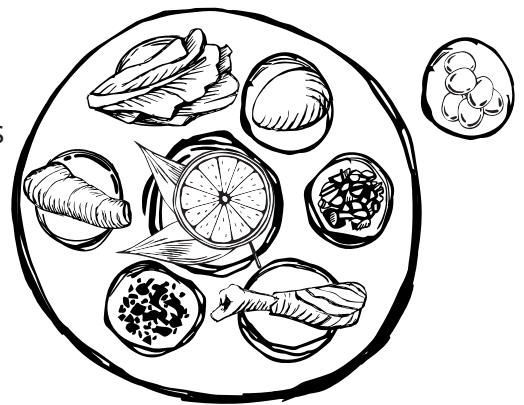
Download a short, energetic, [family-friendly Passover Haggadah](#).

- **Seder plate:** The centerpiece of the seder table is the seder plate, with its symbols of the Passover story — roasted egg, shank bone, *maror* (bitter herbs), *karpas* (green vegetable), *chazeret* (often romaine lettuce), and *charoset* (chopped apples, nuts, and wine).

[Learn](#) about the symbols on the seder plate.

Many people include additional modern symbols on the seder plate to reflect other ideals of freedom — including an orange to represent the rights of women and other historically marginalized groups, and olives as a wish for peace in Israel.

Click [here](#) for modern additions to the seder plate.



- **Matzah:** Many people eat unleavened bread (matzah) during Passover instead of leavened bread. This tradition recalls the story that the Israelites left Egypt so quickly that they didn't have time for the bread to rise. It also represents the “bread of affliction,” evoking the taste of a time of servitude.
- **Fours:** Several aspects of the seder happen in fours. We:
  - Drink four cups of wine (or grape juice) over the course of the meal.
  - Sing the Four Questions (*Mah Nishtanah*), exploring the ways the seder is different from a typical night).
  - Discuss the archetypes of four types of children (a key part of the holiday is teaching the Passover story to all children).

Here are some activities to help you explore the customs of Passover with your grandchild:

### How Are We Different from All Other Families?

During the seder, we traditionally ask the Four Questions (*Mah Nishtanah*), exploring how this night is different from all other nights (for example, on this night we eat matzah). Reimagine the Four Questions as a way to think about your own family.



#### Instructions:

1. Think about this question: How are we different from all other families? (Think about who your family members are, where you live, things you like to do, interesting family stories, and other family dynamics.)
2. Together, create four answers to this question to share at the seder.
3. Alternatively, you can go around the seder table, with each person sharing their own answer to the question.
4. You can also use this prompt as a way for you and your grandchild to think about how you would describe your relationship with each other. You can write or draw your answers together and paste this page inside the Haggadah your family uses. Each year, as your grandchild grows older, you can add new answers to the question.

### Afikoman Scavenger Hunt

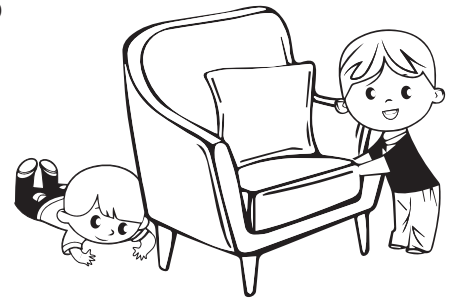
At the beginning of the seder, we hide a piece of matzah called the afikoman somewhere in the house. After the meal, children of all ages search for the afikoman and sometimes exchange it for a small prize (often all the kids get a reward). Families have different traditions for who hides and who finds the afikoman.

#### Materials:

Paper; crayons or markers

#### Instructions:

Create a visual afikoman scavenger hunt using pieces of paper with 5–7 numbered drawings — you can print out pictures from the internet or cut them out of magazines or flyers — that serve as clues (kitchen counter, bathtub, TV, bookshelf). Participants might like to work in teams to find each new clue, ending with the treasure — the afikoman!

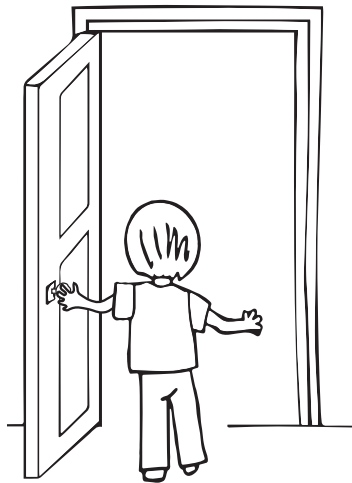


**Option:** Write out the clues (for example, “You sit on me to read a story” would guide you to an armchair).

## Other Fun Passover Rituals Young Kids Love

Here are a few customs that delight children through physical movement and imaginative play:

- **B'dikat Chametz:** On the evening before the first night of Passover, search for and remove all of the *chametz* (leavening) in the house. Many people symbolically hide ten pieces of bread around the house and search for them in the dark by candlelight or flashlight.
  - Let the children hide the ten pieces of bread and then guide you to them, or you can hide them and have the children try to find them.
- **Handwashing Ritual:** We ritually wash our hands during the seder, including saying the handwashing blessing. Some people bring a bowl, a cup or pitcher, and a small towel to the table and wash each other's hands.
  - Young children can have lots of fun being in charge of this step — going around the table and helping to wash and dry everyone's hands.
- **Elijah's Cup and Miriam's Cup:** Many people put a cup of wine or grape juice on the seder table for Elijah, the prophet who symbolizes justice and peace. Toward the end of the seder, we open the door to symbolically welcome the presence of Elijah into the house. Many people also include a cup of water for Miriam, in honor of her courage and role in the liberation of the Israelites.
  - Leave the cups out through the night. The next morning, ask the children to take a look and see if Elijah and Miriam had anything to drink overnight.



## Dipping for the Plagues

At the seder, many families have the tradition of dipping a finger (often their pinkie) into the Kiddush cup (wine goblet) and taking out a drop as each of the Ten Plagues is mentioned. By doing this, we remember the hardship inflicted upon the Egyptians even as we celebrate our freedom.

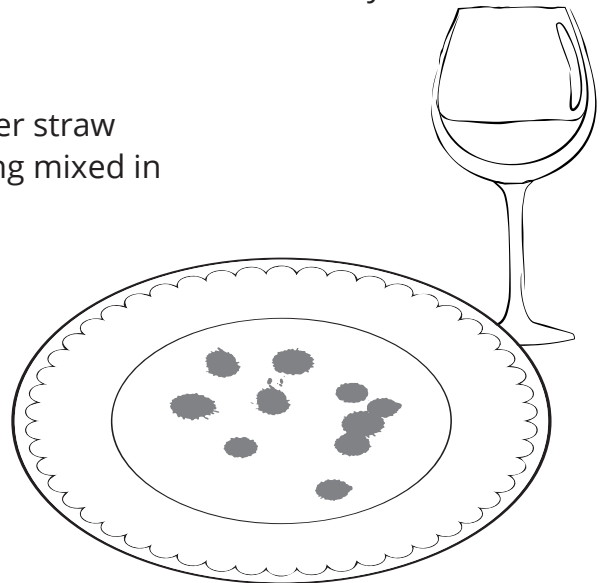
Create an image out of the ten drops in this creative STEAM activity.

### Materials:

- Paper plate
- Medicine dropper or reusable or paper straw
- Grape juice or water with food coloring mixed in

### Instructions:

1. Have a conversation about the ritual of taking out wine from the cup. Why do you think we take away from our celebration in this way as part of the seder?
2. Now, experiment with different ways to take ten drops out of a cup (using either grape juice or water with food coloring mixed in).
3. Try using your finger, a medicine dropper, and a straw. Which is the most effective?
4. Use your finger to move the drops around the paper plate. Can you create an image that way? What does the shape look like to you?





## 2 As If You Were There — Bringing the Story of Passover to Life

### The Story of Passover

The following is an adaptation of the Passover story for young children. You can learn more about the history of Passover and the origins of the holiday [here](#).

Read or tell your grandchild the story of Passover whether you are together in person or at a distance. Your grandchild may like to draw the story while you tell it or afterward.

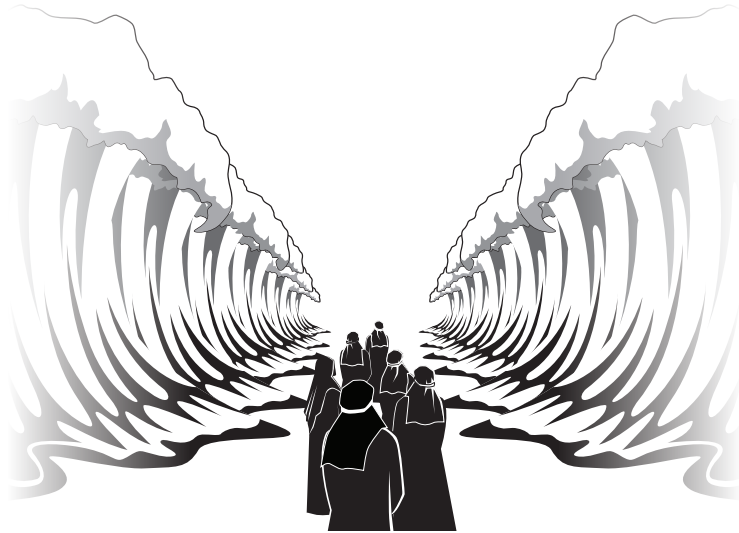
**Our story begins** a long, long time ago in ancient Egypt. A small basket floated along the Nile River, and a baby was cooing inside. Who was this baby, and why was he floating along the river in a basket? The basket traveled all along the winding river and arrived at the steps of the palace of the Pharaoh who ruled over Egypt. “Where did you come from?” asked the Pharaoh’s daughter, who was bathing in the river. “I will name you Moses [meaning ‘drawn from the water’] and will keep you safe here in the palace.” Hiding in the reeds was the baby’s sister, Miriam, who secretly protected him along his watery journey. “You’ll be safer here, far away from the hard work the Israelites have to do,” she whispered. “I know one day we’ll meet again!”

Pharaoh forced the Israelite people (like Miriam’s family) to work for him all day in the hot sun. As Moses grew up, he saw that Pharaoh’s kingdom was unfair, and he was upset for the Israelites. “I can’t live in a place that treats people this way,” he thought, and he decided to leave Egypt and go into the wilderness.

As he traveled, Moses discovered an incredible sight — a bush that was lit up with fire, without being burned to ashes. Suddenly a voice from inside the bush spoke to him. Some people believe this was a message from God. “Moses, you must go back to Egypt and help free the Israelites. You are one of them. Go to Pharaoh and tell him to let your people go!”







Moses went back to Egypt, but Pharaoh said, “No, no, no, I will not let the Israelites go!” Suddenly, bad things (called “plagues”) started to happen in Egypt — frogs came up from the river, wild animals roamed the streets, and hail rained down from the sky.

After each awful event, Moses asked Pharaoh, “Can my people leave now?” Each time, Pharaoh said no. Finally, Pharaoh changed his mind. Moses told the Israelites, “Quickly, pack up your belongings! You are finally free!” The people couldn’t believe it! They left so quickly that their bread didn’t even have time to rise.

Their journey out of Egypt was cut short by a large body of water in front of them; it was the Sea of Reeds. “There’s no way across!” they cried. Moses raised his hands in the air, and the waters of the Reed Sea parted into two walls. Moses said, “Let’s go everyone! We can safely walk across!” Miriam picked up her tambourine, and she and the women led the Israelites in song and dance after they had crossed safely. Moses then led the people into the wilderness to find a home of their own. They were finally free!

Listen to [“Miriam’s Song,”](#) by Jewish musician Debbie Friedman.

### **Questions to ask about the story:**

- We imagine the Israelites felt a mix of excitement and fear when Moses told them they could leave Egypt. When is a time you felt both excited and nervous?
- In what ways were Moses and Miriam good leaders?
- Which part of the Passover story is most interesting to you? Why does it stand out?
- For older children: What comparable stories do you know where a villain tries to control others? What happened?

## Participatory Passover: The Story in Five Seder Scenes

During the Passover seder, we try to experience the story “as if we ourselves” were leaving Egypt. Rather than just telling the story, you can try acting it out to bring it to life.

Use the script below as part of your Haggadah at the seder or play-act the story at a different time you are together in person or on a video call. You will also find easy and simple actions included in each scene so that everyone can get involved in the storytelling.

*Note:* With a child too young to read, you can teach them their line first and then cue them to say it at the correct time.

**Characters:** Miriam, Pharaoh’s Daughter, Moses, Pharaoh, Voice in the Burning Bush



### Scene 1: Baby in the Basket

*During the scene, you can wrap a small doll in a blanket or towel and pass it around the table, pretending it is the basket with baby Moses inside.*

**MIRIAM:** Don’t worry. I’ll keep you safe as you travel down the river!

*Everyone at the table can make the gurgling sound of the river water.*

**PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER:** What is inside this basket? It’s a baby! I will name you Moses. That means “drawn from the water.” I’ll keep you safe here in the palace as you grow.

### Scene 2: Moses Makes a Big Decision

*During the scene, you can stack objects (such as marshmallows and toothpicks) to build miniature pyramids to create Egypt at the table.*

**PHARAOH:** Moses, look at the incredible city we are building!

**MOSES:** Who are those people working so hard to build it for you?

**PHARAOH:** Those are the Israelites. They must work for me and do what I say.

**MOSES:** That doesn’t seem fair. They are working so hard in the hot sun while we stand here in the shade. (To himself) I need to leave this place!

*Everyone can move their arms as if they are Moses running fast into the wilderness.*

### Scene 3: Moses and the Burning Bush

*During the scene, you can turn off the lights and turn on flashlights to pretend you are looking at the Burning Bush.*

**MOSES:** Look at that bush. It's on fire!

**VOICE:** Moses, you must go back to Egypt and help the Israelites. You need to tell Pharaoh to let the people go!

**MOSES:** But what if Pharaoh won't listen to me?

**VOICE:** I will be with you to help you. The Israelite people need you!

*Everyone at the table can create their own motion to show the flames of the fire and make the sound of a crackling fire with their voices.*

### Scene 4: Let My People Go!

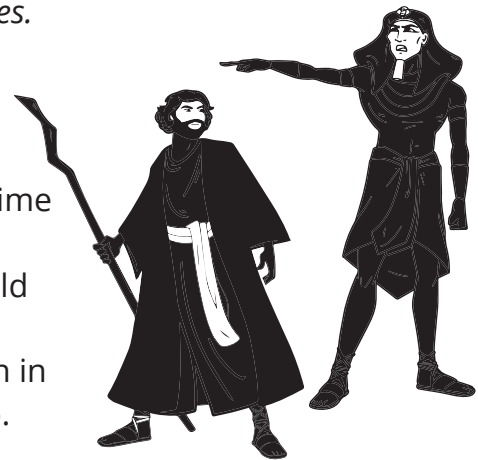
**MOSES:** Pharaoh, the Israelite people have worked for you long enough. It is time to let them go free!

**PHARAOH:** No way, Moses. I need them to build my cities. I will not let them go!

**MOSES:** Terrible things are going to happen in Egypt if you don't let the people go.

**PHARAOH:** I won't change my mind!

*Everyone at the table can either hold up their hands, pretending to be Moses, or cross their arms and shake their heads no, as if they are Pharaoh.*



### Scene 5: Freedom Time

**MOSES:** Pharaoh finally changed his mind! Israelites, it is time for you to pack up your bags and follow me to freedom.

*Everyone stands up and walks around the table, pretending to hold a heavy bag on their back through the hot desert.*

**MIRIAM:** There's a great big sea in front of us, how are we going to get across?

*Everyone makes the whooshing sound of waves crashing.*

**MOSES:** The Sea of Reeds split. It's a miracle!

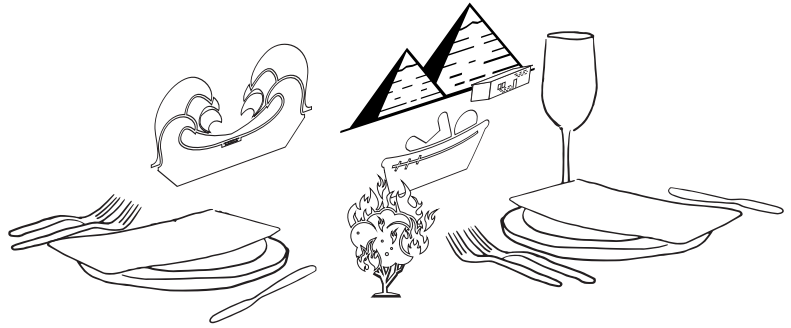
**MIRIAM:** Follow me, everyone. Let's dance and sing our way to freedom!

*Everyone claps and cheers wildly. If you like, you can dance and sing in a circle around the seder table.*

THE END

## Miniature Table Setting

The Passover story is larger than life and epic in scale. Use your creativity and objects you find around the house to retell the story through miniature scenes!



1. Read the retelling of the Passover story on pages 8-9.
2. Choose a few key scenes to recreate as miniature tabletop scenes using toys and household items. Choose your own, or select from this list:
  - a. Baby Moses traveling down the Nile River in a basket.
  - b. Moses encountering the burning bush in the wilderness.
  - c. Miriam dancing with the Israelites as they cross through the Sea of Reeds after the waters parted.
3. Together, think about what is happening in the scene. Ask: Who are the characters? What are they doing? What do you see around them in your imagination? Write out your ideas.
4. Now, think about what you have around the house to create the scene in miniature on a tabletop. Can you use a dish towel to make the Nile River? Legos or other blocks to build Ancient Egypt? How can a flashlight, aluminum foil, and a houseplant become the burning bush?
5. Go on a scavenger hunt around the house to collect toys and objects to use.
6. Build your miniature scene on the table.
7. If your family celebrates Passover with a seder, use your miniature scene to decorate your seder table. You can point to your scene and bring it to life by moving the toys, and creating sound effects with your voices as the story is told.

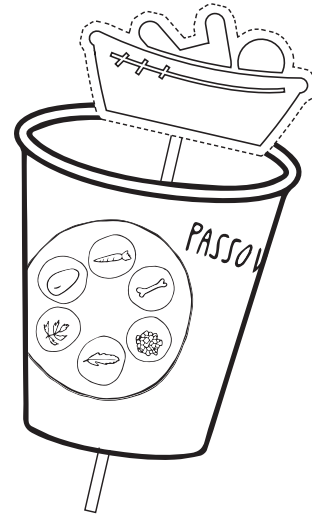
For grandparents at distance, you can brainstorm ideas together on Zoom or FaceTime, and then build your own miniature scenes separately. When you are done, you can show each other what you build, and compare how you used your creativity to create the scenes!

## Four-Cups Puppets

Create four puppets out of paper cups to explore the story of Passover, using the symbol of the four cups of the seder.

### Materials:

- Four-Cups Puppet Template
- Paper or plastic cup
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Popsicle sticks, chopsticks, or straws



### Instructions:

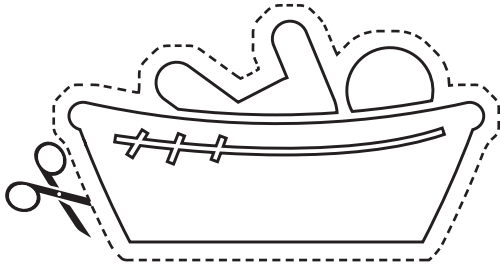
1. Color in and cut out the four puppets on the Four-Cups Puppet Template page.
2. Attach each puppet to a popsicle stick, chopstick, or straw.
3. Decorate the paper or plastic cup using crayons or markers. You may also choose to decorate four cups, each one to correspond to one of the puppet pieces. Cut a small hole in the center of the bottom of the cup.
4. Feed the stick of the puppet through the hole on the inside of the cup. Lower and lift the stick from the bottom of the cup to make the puppet appear!
5. Use your voices to create the sound of each puppet character as they appear (the cooing of the baby in the basket, construction noises as the buildings appear, the crackling of the fire, and the rushing of the water).
6. During the seder, you can have one puppet emerge each time you drink a cup of wine or grape juice, or use the puppet any way you choose.



For grandparents at a distance, use FaceTime or Zoom in creative ways. One of you can have the puppet emerge from the cup on camera while the other creates the sound effects of the scene.

## Four-Cups Puppet Template

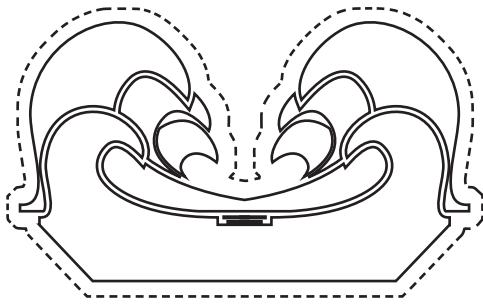
Use these puppets for the project on page 13.



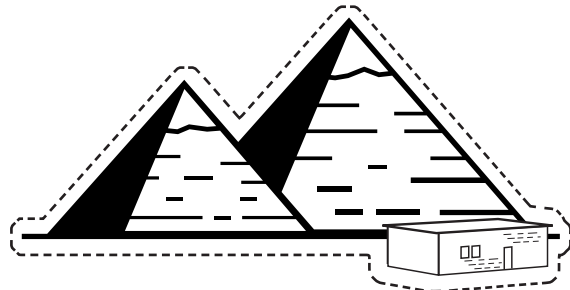
**Basket**



**Burning Bush**



**Sea of Reeds**



**Egyptian Buildings**

## The Seder Story Through Our Senses

During the Seder, we use our senses to experience the story of the Exodus from Egypt. In this activity, use your imagination and creativity to bring the Passover story to life through a variety of senses.

1. Read the Passover story together (you can use our version on pages 8 and 9).
2. Now, do a sensory scavenger hunt through the story with each of your senses. With each step below, write or draw your answers in the Sensory Seder Template on page 16.
3. **Sight:** What are the images and pictures you envision in the story? Draw three simple pictures from the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
4. **Sound:** What are three sounds you can hear in the story (for example, the rushing of the Nile River water or the buzzing or clicking sound of the locusts)? Try to make the sounds with your mouth or with objects, or you can search online for sound effects that match the ones you imagine.
5. **Smell and Taste:** Name a few smells and tastes you can imagine from the story (for example, the smell of the matzah coming out of the oven before the Israelites left Egypt, and the salty taste of the sweat dripping down the faces of the Israelites as they worked in the hot sun). Describe them and write them down.
6. **Touch:** Finally, imagine any textures from the story (for example, what do you think the basket that baby Moses was placed in feels like to touch? How hot was the burning bush as Moses got closer? What do you think the ground felt like to walk on when the Sea of Reeds split?).
7. If your family holds a Seder, you can share some of the ideas you came up with, and you can also connect the sensory experiences of the Seder to the story (for example, the taste of the saltwater representing the tears of the Israelites or the charoset representing the mortar of the bricks).



## Sensory Seder Template

Use this page for the activity on page 15.



# 3 In Every Generation

## Connecting the Seder to Our Lives Today

Explore the themes of how to be a fair leader to others and what it means to be free.

**Here are some activities to explore and share the ways the seder connects to our lives today:**

### Follow the Leader

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, and Miriam led them in song and dance to celebrate after crossing the Sea of Reeds. How do you lead others in an activity? Use this game with young children to explore the idea of being a leader.

1. Decide who will be the leader and who will be the follower.
2. The leader slowly moves their body into different poses or makes different facial expressions, and the follower tries to match them as closely as possible.
3. The leader can also move around the room, and the follower needs to closely follow behind, mimicking the leader's movements. The leader can walk slow or fast, pretend to swim or fly, or jump and spin.
4. Now switch, so that the follower becomes the leader.
5. After playing, ask your grandchild:
  - When you were the leader, how did you help the follower play along? When you were the follower, what did you need from the leader to be able to play?
  - When you lead a game or activity, how can you treat your friends so that they want to join in and play along? How do you make sure that everyone feels included in the activity?

### Modeling After Moses

Moses was a humble and generous leader, standing up as a strong voice for the Israelite people. Use the template on the next page to explore the qualities of a successful leader.

1. Together, think about the leaders in your life (for example, a child might think about a teacher, a caregiver, or the captain of a team). What does the group or family need from the leader (for example, considering everyone's opinion, then making a strong decision; being the first to do what you ask of others)? What qualities does a leader need to have (for example, patience, respect for group members, bravery, calmness)?

2. On the lines below, write the name of the leader you look up to, and write four qualities of leadership around the silhouette of Moses.
3. Have a conversation about the ways you can be more of a leader in your own life. (For example: What do others need from you? How can you use these qualities of leadership to help and support the people around you?)

### Four qualities of leadership

A leader I look up to:

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### Let Us!

1. Explore the concept of freedom with your grandchild. For a younger child, talk about sharing, choice, and fairness to others. With older children, explore ways they have seen or experienced people advocating for their own rights or for the rights of others.
2. Together, create your own freedom campaign slogans inspired by Moses's charge "Let my people go!" Write a slogan to advocate for the cause using a slogan that starts "Let..." For example, a younger child may design the phrase "Let everyone have a turn!" while older children may come up with "Let everyone have the right to make their own health decisions!" Practice saying your slogans with conviction.
3. Together, design a poster to illustrate the slogan.
4. You can present the campaign and poster at the seder and share why you chose this slogan.



## The Four Grandparents/Grandchildren

In the Haggadah, we read about four types of children and how to teach them about the story of Passover. Many interpret the Four Children as traits that are a part of all of us. We each have our ways of learning about the Exodus story each year.

1. Explore the ways you are like each of the four types of children. What are four (or more) types of grandparents and grandchildren? When have you shown traits of these four types?
2. Use the prompts below. You can either share stories, or draw pictures together to depict each of the four characteristics.
3. You can also use your bodies to create a frozen picture or sculpture to depict each of these types.
  - *The "Wise" Grandparent/Grandchild:* Share a story of a time you've each acted wisely. How did it feel?
  - *The "Wicked" Grandparent/Grandchild:* Share a story of a time you've each acted in a way that you were not proud of. What is a different choice you could have made?
  - *The "Simple" Grandparent/Grandchild:* Share a story of a time you didn't understand something, and you asked lots of questions. What did you learn by asking questions?
  - *The Grandparent/Grandchild Who Doesn't Know How to Ask:* Share a story of a time when you were speechless. What made you feel that you had nothing to say?
4. What adjective would you use to describe yourself today? Fill in the blank and share your answer with each other and why you chose that adjective.
  - Today, I am the \_\_\_\_\_ Grandparent.
  - Today, I am the \_\_\_\_\_ Grandchild.

