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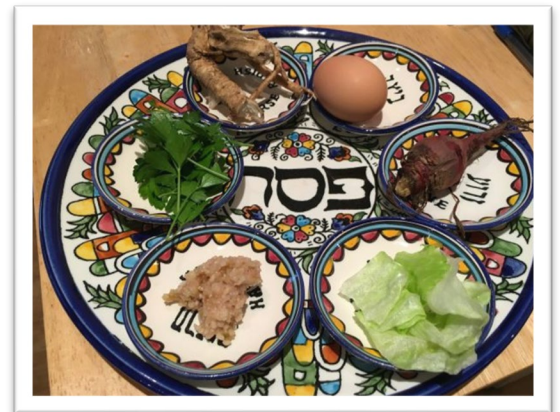
ISRAEL CORNER

Celebrating 80 Years of Bringing Learning and Leadership to Life

Article 6 – April 2025 | Nisan 5785

What is the Most Celebrated Jewish Holiday?

You might first think of Yom Kippur or Chanukah, but the answer is Passover! In both Israel and the U.S., more people gather for the Passover Seder than for any other Jewish celebration. This powerful tradition is filled with elements that make it an ideal model for learning with young children.



At its heart, the Seder is an immersive experience. It teaches through storytelling, invites hands-on participation, and encourages curiosity through questions. (Did you notice that this column began with a question?) These same elements—story, experience, and inquiry—can help young children form a meaningful connection between Passover and Israel.

Learning Through Story

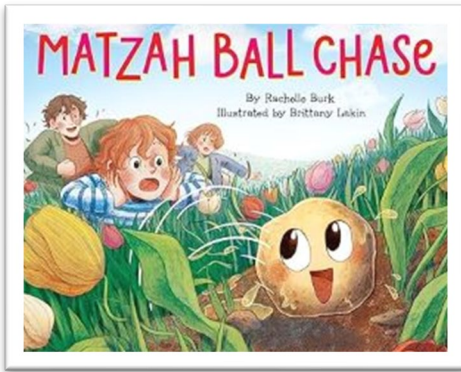
The Passover story of the Jewish people's journey from slavery to freedom, eventually forming a nation, is a central narrative of Jewish identity. Some wonderful picture books combine Passover and Israel, offering children a rich connection to both. Here are a few favorites:



[How It's Made: Matzah](#)

by Allison Ofanansky, photography by Eliyahu Alpern.

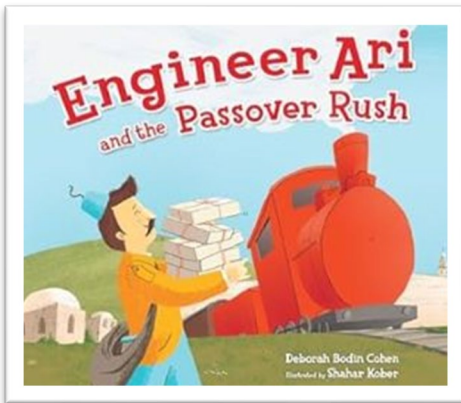
This informative photo-book follows matzah from field to table in Israel. Readers meet the people who harvest wheat, grind flour, and bake matzah—whether by hand in a rural village or in a modern factory, all racing to meet the strict 18-minute time limit. The book also showcases other Passover preparations in Israel, including baking matzah at home, decorating Elijah's cup, and growing greens for the Seder plate.



Matzah Ball Chase

by Rachelle Burk, illustrated by Brittany Lakin.

A rhyming, fast-paced romp through Israel in the spirit of *The Gingerbread Man*. Just as a boy is about to enjoy his grandmother's matzah ball soup, the mischievous matzah ball bounces away! The chase leads through famous Israeli landmarks, including Jerusalem's Old City, the Dead Sea, Masada, and all the way to Eilat. With lively illustrations, this book introduces children to Israel's geography and Passover customs in a playful way.



Engineer Ari and the Passover Rush

by Deborah Bodin Cohen, illustrated by Shahar Kober

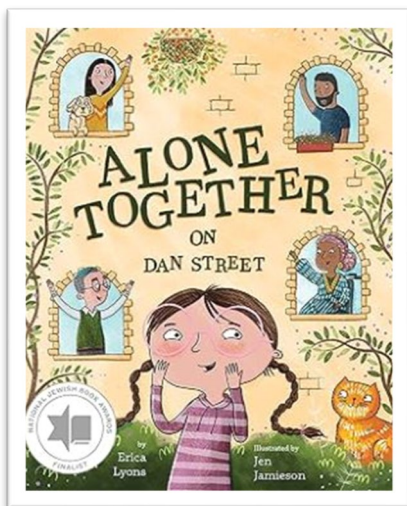
This historical tale follows Engineer Ari as he rushes his steam train from Jaffa to Jerusalem to gather everything needed for his Seder. Along the way, friendly locals help him collect Seder plate items. This fun story highlights friendship, ingenuity, and a glimpse of Jerusalem's first train and holiday preparations in Israel.



Jodie's Passover Adventure

by Anna Levine, illustrated by Ksenia Topaz

Set in modern Jerusalem, this adventurous story follows young Jodie, an aspiring archaeologist, as she explores Hezekiah's Tunnel in the City of David during Passover. Alongside her cousin Zach, Jodie embarks on a thrilling holiday adventure, blending history and excitement. (If Jodie sounds familiar, you may recall *Jodie's Hanukkah Dig* from our December recommendations!)



Alone Together on Dan Street

by Erica Lyons, illustrated by Jen Jamieson.

A touching contemporary story set in Jerusalem during the first pandemic Passover. Young Mira, practicing the Four Questions on her balcony, inspires her neighbors to create a communal Seder—each family singing from their own home. This hopeful tale highlights Israeli resilience and the power of connection, even in challenging times.

Hands-On Experiences

Passover is a holiday of action—dipping, tasting, breaking, hiding, and searching! Here are some creative ways to connect children to Passover traditions in Israel:



- **Art for the Seder Table:** Encourage children to draw pictures of how Passover is celebrated by some people in Israel—picnics with matzah, prayers at the Western Wall, families hiking in the desert. These can be placed on the Seder table as a conversation starter.
- **Matzah Cover with Israeli Themes:** Have children create a matzah cover featuring Israeli landscapes, symbols, or holiday traditions.
- **Elijah's Cup:** Many families place a cup of Elijah in the center of the Seder table. Children can decorate their own special Elijah's Cup, drawing inspiration from Israeli art and colors.

The Power of a Question

Asking questions is at the heart of the Seder, and young children naturally excel in curiosity! Here are a few ways to encourage questioning:

- **Grandparent or Other Elder**

Interviews: Invite grandparents or other elders to share a Passover memory from their childhood, and have children ask follow-up questions. This can spark meaningful intergenerational connections.

- **Passover Mystery Objects:** Place various Passover items on a table—matzah, horseradish root, a Kiddush cup—and let children ask questions about them.



- **Google and AI Exploration:** If your child asks a Passover-related question that stumps you, explore the answer together using technology. (Just like at the Seder, sometimes a great question leads to even better discoveries!)



Dayenu—It is Enough

There are countless ways to make Passover meaningful for young children, but as the beloved Seder song [*Dayenu*](#) reminds us, sometimes what we have is enough. So, whether through stories, hands-on projects, or encouraging curiosity, may your family's Passover be filled with joy, learning, and a deep connection to Israel.

Chag Pesach Sameach!

- Meir and Alana

[The Robert Russell Early Childhood Department of CAJE | The Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education](#) in Miami presents a new initiative aimed at enriching your children's understanding of Israel through engaging and thought-provoking content from a monthly article penned by two early childhood education experts: [Rabbi Dr. Meir Muller](#) and [Alana Gelnick](#).

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