



Passover Seder for Young Children

2-3 years

Passover is an exceptional annual holiday that is especially participatory for young children. The customs and rituals practiced in celebrating the holiday necessitate use of all of our senses. We hear the story of the Exodus from Egypt; we hear the repetitions of phrases and traditional (and not so traditional) songs and prayers; we see the symbols in our tasty food commemorating our ancestors' experience.

This "Twenty-minute Pesach Seder for 2s and 3s" is designed to provide the "telling" of the story with interactive participation throughout. The adults should read through it thoroughly, prepare in advance all of the tools and supplies needed, and determine who will play which roles so that the rhythm of the story can move forward without interruptions.

Adults should enthusiastically ask children to participate by repeating the last line of each part of the story. It may take a few tries, but if the adults give facial and physical cues, the children will participate fully.

Passover is a wonderful holiday to experience with little ones. Between ages 2 and 3, children's imaginations and creativity explode. They are no longer content with just imitation. They are capable of putting together and acting out all kinds of scenarios. They are acquiring impressive physical and verbal skills. Their attention span and memory lengthen significantly. They love the opportunity to use these new skills. They are beginning to expand their interests beyond home and family and include peers in their activities. This interactive seder experience combines the traditional storytelling with things that excite 2-and 3-year-olds: music, movement, exploration of number concepts, imagination and creativity.

Setting the Scene

Pretend we are all together in a group living far away in the Land of Egypt. Head scarves for each participant tied with twine or cord can help set the mood.

Adult 1 (*rhythmically*)

Shalom! Shalom! We say Shalom!
We wish you well and welcome you.
It's seder time, it's seder time! (*Children repeat*)
Four questions begin the story we tell
To four kinds of children we know so well.
(*Everyone counts to four or counts out four people*)

Adult 2

Once upon a time in the Land of Egypt,
A ruler named Pharaoh
Made the Jews work very hard.

Adult 1

We worked all day,
We worked all night,
We had no rest,
We knew it was not right. (*Children repeat, while stamping feet.*) (*Children stand and pretend to be hammering stone and digging hard ground.*)

Bang Bang

Bang, bang, bang, hold your hammer low.
Bang, bang, bang, give a heavy blow.
For it's work, work, work, every day and every night.
For it's work, work, work, when it's dark and when it's light.
Dig, dig, dig, dig your shovels deep.
Dig, dig, dig, there's no time for sleep.
For it's work, work, work, every day and every night.
For it's work, work, work, when it's dark and when it's light.
(*Children are seated back at their places.*)

Teva, Teva (Ark, Ark)

(Sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle")

Teva, teva Moses lay

In a teva lined with hay.

Down the River Nile he sailed,

Found by a princess who heard his wail.

(All children wail)

Teva, teva Moses lay in a teva filled with hay.

There he stayed and learned and grew,

There he called home, but inside he knew,

Something more was going on,

He would have to find his real home.

Moses grew into a man,

And one day he ran and ran and ran.

He found himself in a strange new land.

He met some people who lent a helping hand.

Moses, Moses spoke with Adonai.

Moses, Moses would be our guy.

Adult 2

Who will save us? Who will help?

God heard our cry and made a plan.

One helper was needed to save God's clan.

Who will save us? Who will help? *(Children repeat)*

Adult 3

When Moses was born his mother did fear

That soldiers would take her child so dear.

So she made a plan to save her son,

And that's when we saw how God's work can get done. *(Children repeat)*

As the parts below are read, each adult should act out the motions described in their verses, encouraging the kids to do the same.

Adult 3

One fine day, Moses climbed and climbed so high. (*Pretend to climb*)
He thought that he actually could reach the sky.
There on the mountain was an awesome sight.
A bush stood burning with a radiant light. (*Reach hands upward, like rays*)
It was God right there, right there in the bush.
It was God speaking to Moses. Oh my, how he shook! (*Everybody shake*)
With fear and awe and confusion and might,
Moses understood he was starting a new time in his life.

Adult 4

So down the mountain Moses came, a staff in hand, a face of faith.
"To Egypt I must go," he told his wife, Tziporrah.
To Pharaoh I must say, "Please let my people go!"
To Pharaoh I must say, "Please let my people go!" (*Children repeat*)

Let My People Go

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



First Cup of Grape Juice

Children or families should each have four cups for juice at their places so they can count them together with their family or with an adult leader. You may have the cups numbered in advance, each with numbers 1 through 4 on each cup to reinforce the children's understanding. Number concepts are really exciting for this age group.

Adult 1

We drink four cups of wine because there are four Hebrew words for freedom.
(Count the cups together)

Z'man Chayrutaynu, the Season of our Freedom, is the first name of our holiday.
We raise our cups numbered 1 and sing the blessing together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

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

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

Adult 2

Moses went to the Pharaoh and said, "Let us go!" (Children repeat "Let us go!")
He looked him in the eye and said, "My God says so." (Point your finger and say it strong!)

Pharaoh laughed, Pharaoh smirked, Pharaoh folded his arms and said, (Children fold their arms and say what Pharaoh said)

"No way, no way, will I let your people free. I need them to build my great big city.
I need them to make the statues. I need them to make bricks.
I need them to schlep water. I need them for all my tricks."

Ask the children to fill in the end of the sentence to think of things the Pharaoh needed the slaves to do for him:

I need them to _____.

I need them to _____.

Adult 1

I will return, you will see
The God of Israel will set my people free.
You have one day to change your mind,
Or we will find ways to make you more kind.

Adult 2

So Moses went home and saw his family.
He was sad, he was troubled, and he prayed to Elohim.
They made a plan to try to teach.
The Pharaoh must learn that God is our King.

Adult 3

Pharaoh still would not be kind,
So God sent some reasons to help change his mind.
He sent some frogs to jump and twitch
(All pretend to be frogs and jump, jump, jump)
He sent some bugs to make Pharaoh itch.
(Everyone scratches)
Blood in the water turned the river red.
Flies all around made him cover his head.
There were 10 plagues God sent in all,
So finally to Moses, Pharaoh did call.



Adult 4

Let's all count to 10 together. When we count the plagues in the seder, we mark them by taking a little of the juice (wine) out of one of our cups with our finger and put it on our napkins, like this. *(Demonstrate first, then do it together while counting to 10. Don't list the plagues; just count to 10 to get the idea that there were 10 things God did to help set our people free.)*

As we sing about the plagues,
We really use our imagination
And try to feel and try to see
And try to hear and try to taste
And try to smell all the plagues
That God poured down on Egypt.

Optional: *Sing or play Bring the Sabbath Home. This also could be an opportunity for the children to get up and move or dance to the music. If they listen very carefully, they can try to pretend to be the plague being sung about.*

Children should return to their places for the second cup of juice.

Second Cup of Grape Juice

Adult 3

We drink four cups of juice because there are four Hebrew words for freedom.
The second name for our holiday is *Chag Ha-Pesach*, Festival of the Paschal Lamb.
We raise our cups numbered 2 and sing the blessing together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

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

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

Adult 4

(Act out packing here)

It took lots of patience. It took lots of work.
But Pharaoh was being a great big jerk.
At last he said, "Yes, take your people now."
And we packed up our toys and our pillows and
blankies. *(Encourage the children to say something
they would pack and pretend to put it in the suitcase.)*



Adult 1

We packed up our shoes and our hairbrushes and our crayons.

Adult 2

We packed up our toothbrushes and our socks and our pets.

Adult 3

We packed up everything we could 'cause we had to move fast.

Ten Plagues in Egypt Land

(Words and music by Peter and Ellen Allard, from the CD *Bring the Sabbath Home*)

(Chorus) 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 plagues in Egypt Land (*repeat*)

Blood in the water made the river run red, 10 plague in Egypt Land.

Frogs were jumping in Pharaoh's hair, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

1-2-3....

Creepy crawly, itchy lice, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

Filthy flies so dirty and vile, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

1-2-3...

The cattle and the horse and the oxen died, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

Boils and blisters on his skin, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

1-2-3...

The hail rained down from the heavens so high, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

Swarms of locusts ate the crops, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

Dark descended in the light of the day, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

1-2-3...

First-born was the final blow, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

Finally Pharaoh let the people go, 10 plagues in Egypt Land.

1-2-3...

Adult 4

We didn't trust Pharaoh, and we thought there was a chance...

Adult 5

That he would change his mind and capture us right back.

Adult 1

But we were on our way to the Promised Land.

So watch out bad Pharaoh, we're a strong Jewish clan! (*Children repeat*)

Third Cup of Grape Juice

Adult 2

We drink four cups of wine because there are four Hebrew words for freedom.

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

We raise our cups numbered (*count 1-2-3*) and sing the blessing together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

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

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

Adult 3

Every year at our Passover seder, we invite a very special guest.

Adult 4

Do you know who it could be? Is it Mickey Mouse? No!

(*Encourage the children to respond with a group "no."*)

Is it Snow White? No!

Adult 3

Is it the Harry Potter? No!
Is it the rabbi or the cantor? No!

Adult 4

It's a very special prophet who goes from house to house on Passover night and has a sip of wine from a special cup put out just for him!

Adult 3

Elijah is his name! Elijah the Prophet!
We'll stand up and face the door and use our imaginations to welcome Elijah because one day, we hope very soon, Elijah will come and help to make peace throughout the world!

Adult 4

Let's sing a special song just for Elijah.

Eliyahu HaNavi

*Eliyahu hanavi,
Eliyahu hatishbi,
Eliyahu hagiladi.*

Bimheirah b'yameinu, yavo eileinu, im Mashiach ben David.

May Elijah the prophet,
Elijah the Tishbite,
Elijah of Gilead,
quickly in our day come to us
heralding redemption.

Fourth Cup of Grape Juice

Adult 1

Now we'll raise our cups, once again, for the fourth cup of wine. (*count cups one at a time ...1-2-3-4*)

The fourth name for our holiday is *Chag Ha-Aviv*, Festival of Spring!

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

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

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

Adult 2

We eat matzah to remind us that when Pharaoh let us go we had to hurry, and there wasn't enough time to finish making the bread. So, we took the dough that wasn't ready yet.

Adult 4

Matzah with cream cheese, matzah with jelly, matzah with eggs, matzah with butter. There are lots of ways of eating matzah, but during our seder, it's *charoset* we'll eat to remind us of the bricks the slaves were forced to make.

(Everyone gets a piece of matzah and some charoset, and we say the blessings before eating.)

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

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

Adult 3

What's a great meal without dessert? During our seder, we eat a special piece of matzah known as the *afikoman*.

We raise our piece of matzah and sing the blessing together:

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

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



Adult 1

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

Adult 2

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.

Adult 3

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 Chai

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 one edge of the parachute, and you proceed to walk in a circle, pulling the parachute up in the air and back down again.

Additional Activities

- Dipping the karpas or any green vegetables (celery, cukes, green peppers); this ritual in the seder can be a separate activity or part of a snack.
- “Walking” through the Red Sea on their way to the seder to symbolize making it out of Egypt so that we are now free to celebrate; hang streamers from the door frame to simulate the Red Sea.
- Hiding and finding the *afikoman*.
- Taking care of Baby Moses and other Jewish babies in baskets.
- Making and floating walnut shell baskets with plastic babies in tubs or on water tables.
- Dancing and singing; have an open space with some tambourines, shakers and instruments for the kids to use while dancing and singing for a few minutes before settling down to the seder. When you are ready for the chaos to wind down, practice the “go-and-stop” dance, where a song leader or DJ plays the music and stops suddenly for the kids to freeze.
- Tossing beanbag frogs, blowing bubbles as pretend flies, jumping like grasshoppers, loving and protecting all babies, coloring water red with food coloring or tempera paint, popping bubble wrap “boils”—all to symbolize the plagues.
- Making playdough matzah and pricking it all over.