



COMPANY'S COMING

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Family and friends arrive to visit and take part in a family's Passover celebration. The Four Questions are asked, foods on the seder plate are sampled, and there's a hunt for the afikomen.

The seder (from Hebrew, meaning “order”) is the traditional meal and accompanying ritual commemoration of Passover. The imperative for the annual repetition of the seder is to instruct children about the Israelites’ liberation from Egyptian slavery and the lessons to be learned from it. Telling and re-telling the story fulfills the instruction in Exodus 13:8: “You shall tell your children on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what God did for me when I went out of the land of Egypt.’”

Much of *Company's Coming* is related to the preparation and anticipation of the seder. How wonderful that even the youngest children can take part both before and during the seder. As with many holidays and special family occasions, lifelong memories are created that children carry with them as they mature. In this way, Jewish traditions and values are conveyed from one generation to the next.

Remember that perfection is of no consequence when involving your children in Passover preparations. As soon as they are old enough, encourage your children to:

- create unique decorations for the seder table—clay props for the plagues, name cards for guests, a decoupage platter to use as the seder plate, or a welcome sign for the front door.
- invite a friend, whether Jewish or not, to enjoy the seder with your family and friends.
- help with cooking preparations.

THE AFIKOMEN

From the Greek word meaning dessert, the *afikomen* is the middle of three *matzot* (plural of *matzoh*) on the seder table; it is hidden during the meal by adults, to be searched for and generally “ransomed” by the children present for a small gift or a few coins. The seder cannot officially end without the *afikomen* being eaten by the meal’s participants. It is said that one reason for the *afikomen* ritual is to encourage children to remain awake and attentive until the seder is completed.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Traditionally recited at the seder, the Four Questions are: On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread. On this night, why do we eat only unleavened (*matzoh*)? (To remind us of the haste with which our ancestors left Egypt.) On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. On this night, why only bitter herbs? (To remind us of the bitterness of slavery.) On all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once. On this night, why do we dip them twice? (Some say to remind us of our coming and going from Egypt.) On all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining. On this night, why do we all recline? (To remind us of how free people relax.) These questions and answers are crucial to understanding Passover, and the honor of expressing them is given to a child. Pj