



MATZO BALL BOY

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A lonely bubbe creates a matzo ball boy to keep her company during Passover. The matzo ball boy escapes from her kitchen, and before long everyone is on a mad chase to capture him.

PASSOVER

The holiday of Passover (*Pesach* in Hebrew, pay-sahch), an eight-day holiday (in Israel, it is celebrated for seven), commemorates the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt, which is told in the first 15 chapters of the book of Exodus in the Bible. Marked by a *seder* (a meal) on the first one or two nights we eat an assortment of foods to commemorate the Jews' enslavement in Egypt and their subsequent exodus. Passover is one of the most celebrated holidays by today's Jewish people. Look at the back of this guide for some resources to learn more about this holiday.

However your family chooses to mark Passover, there are many ways to get your children involved. The *seder* is meant to be an interactive event, marked by the constant back and forth of questions by the participants. Passover is the time to really dwell in them. The Four Questions (known in Hebrew as "*Ma Nishtana?*" (ma-neesh-ta-na, which means "What is different?")) is a prime example. The children are directed to sing the song in order to encourage the adults to tell the story of Passover.

The Matzo Ball Boy is a humorous retelling of the Gingerbread man, set in the *shtetls* (villages) of the "old country." Laced with funny Yiddish words (that are explained at the back), it's a great way to transform a well-loved children's fable into a Jewish story and be introduced to some delightful Yiddish words!

ACTIVITIES

At the end of the story, the poor man says: "No one should be alone and hungry on Passover." While he is trying to catch the matzo ball boy, he is also pointing to one of the important ideas of the Passover *seder*: "Let all who are hungry come and eat." Passover is a great time to talk with your kids about the difference you can make as a family in helping those in need. You may want to think about a project you can do together (like collecting food for a homeless shelter) and as individuals (your child can designate toys they no longer want to be given away while you donate books or CDs).

Make matzo balls! Fluffy or heavy, they are often children's favorite part of chicken soup and are as easy as making cookies. You don't even need a recipe, most boxes of matzo meal (the Kosher-for-Passover flour substitute made of ground matzo) come with one, or you can just get the matzo ball mix. Add eyes, a nose and mouth - but make sure you don't put on legs, or your matzo ball might run away!

Loneliness is sadly often a prominent feature of growing older. Think with your children about who might be alone in your area. Even if you can't invite them for *seder*, talk with your children about something you can do to let them know you are thinking of them, like helping them shop for Passover or bringing them Passover flowers and cards.