

BOARD OF JEWISH EDUCATION EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER



First Day of Pesach 15 Nisan, 5780

First Seder March 27, 2021

Pesach is certainly **THE JEWISH HOLIDAY** in terms of enjoyment and family togetherness. And it was meant to be so. The Haggadah shows us that this holiday, more than any other, was designed to include every member of the family in a meaningful way. It is meant to teach and to speak to us all about the very essence of our Jewishness.

The Haggadah that we read on Pesach, (Haggadah means story) recounts the story of the Exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom in our own country. Through the rituals, it teaches us that to remember is essential for a knowledge of ones self and ones own values. Through the direct involvement of the children in the asking of the four questions, the finding of the Afikomen, and the opening of the door for Elijah, the Haggadah helps to focus on the importance of the family. At the same time it demonstrates the soundest educational method for passing on our heritage and sense of belonging to our children-- that of doing.

The word Seder means order, and by giving us the order to follow, the Haggadah not only helps us to feel comfortable in performing the mitzvot of a Pesach Seder, but helps us to realize that we are not alone. All over the world Jewish families will be following the same seder (order), remembering together, and enjoying their Jewishness together, in essentially the same way.

We are lucky. There are many, many different kinds of Haggadot today to choose from! The order is the same, but the way in which the story is told, the songs that are sung, the way the explanations are given, and the illustrations are very different!! It makes it so much easier to find one that each individual family will like!

In our Early Childhood Center we have developed a different Haggadah for each age level. You may want to incorporate some of your child's Haggadah into your own Seder. Please feel free to do so. At our school seder for your child's class there will be a Haggadah for each family to take home.

The different Haggadot for each age level reflect what the children are learning in their class and are designed to be developmentally appropriate for each age. We know that our youngest children have a very different attention span than our Pre-K children

TODDLERS AND 2 YEAR OLDS

Our goal for this young age, simply put, is for the child to feel himself a PART of the celebration of Pesach! Our focus is on the fact that we have this special Jewish Holiday called Pesach, which we celebrate with our family and friends at a Seder. We emphasize how this night is different than any other night. For example, at our Seder we all read a book at the dinner table.

The story of Pesach for the very young has a very simple theme: that long ago the Jewish people were unhappy where they were living in a country called Egypt and that a wonderful man named Moses helped them leave Egypt and go to their own country of Israel, where they were very happy.

The essence of Pesach, REMEMBERING, is emphasized, in that we remember how Moses helped the Jewish people and we remember that the Jewish people didn't have time to bake bread so that they ate a special kind of food called Matzah. The children enjoy eating Matzah in school and pretending to bake flat Matzah using cream colored play-dough with forks or combs for making the holes. They are prepared for the matzah at the Seder table, and their part in the Afikomen ritual, through fun songs and games.

THREE YEAR OLDS

Since Pesach comes in the spring, our Three Year Olds are ready developmentally to take on so much more. They are vitally interested in how the Jewish people coped with a situation where they were not given choices, and were ordered around. At this age, independence and how one expresses it constructively is of major concern to them. They can identify with the sadness of the Jewish people, and be gleeful and proud when Moses is able to secure their freedom.

The three year olds learn more about their own role in the celebration of Pesach. They learn to echo sing the first question (not to memorize it). They learn that there was another man long ago who helped the Jewish people, Eliahu, and that during the Seder they will help to open the door to pretend to invite Eliahu in for the Seder, while everyone sings a welcome song. They will enjoy more of the traditional Seder songs: dancing and singing, Dayeinu; enjoying a nursery rhyme version of the Chad Gadya song; and clapping as they sing faster and faster the song that has ended every seder for centuries, L'shana ha-ba-ah b'Yerushalayim (Next year in Jerusalem).

They will hear about the Jews leaving Egypt and going through the hot sand on the way to Israel, and why we eat Matzah and not bread on Pesach. Each year the children will make a

ritual object to enhance their real Seder. The children are very proud of these objects; a beautiful cloth matzah cover, an afikomen hider, or other objects.

We have an invaluable teaching tool for Pesach in our Centers, the "Standing Haggadah". Rachel Horn, artist and former teacher developed the concept of the "Standing Haggadah". Rachel drew beautiful pictures to illustrate each ritual and story in the Haggadah. Together with the words from our Children's Haggadah, they become a large Haggadah that can stand beside the teacher throughout the teaching of the Pesach exploration! With each new concept the teacher is able to concretely show how and where it appears in the Haggadah, and in this way the "Standing Haggadah" has helped to graphically portray how the Haggadah unifies the whole experience of Pesach.

PRE-K

The Pre-K children are really able to begin to delve into more aspects of the Pesach story and rituals. For example, in the four year old Haggadah we have added the ritual of drinking the wine four different times. The Midrash gives us many different explanations for why we drink these four cups of wine at the Seder. We chose one that we thought would have particular meaning for our four year olds: namely, that the four cups of wine are symbolic of the fact that even while the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt, they (1) retained their Hebrew names, (2) retained their Hebrew language, (3) retained their sense of morality, and (4) retained their identity as Jews. Our children understand these values. They are very excited to use their Hebrew names. Hebrew as a language is used at transition points in their classroom. Throughout this year they have been introduced to, and involved in, different forms of Tzedakah and Mitzvot. And as they continue to learn more and more about themselves as Jews, their Jewish identity strengthens.

The structure of the Haggadah, where there are questions at the beginning and the rest of the Haggadah is in the form of the answers to the questions, is also very age appropriate. This very structure verifies that it is good to ask questions, and since it is the youngest child (who is able to) who asks the Four Questions, it verifies that asking questions is valid and important for children. We recognize this with the children, and encourage them to ask more and more questions of their own so that they can see that we value their open expressions of curiosity. In our Center, questioning on the part of the child is considered an essential part of the learning process.

The Pre-K children will add another Pesach ritual object with a seder plate. Some children will make matching matzah plates to complete the set. We hope that these ritual items will be a part of your family seder's for years to come, creating lasting memories. Pesach is a favorite holiday for so many Jewish people. Perhaps this is so because it is so rich in shared family experiences and so full of fun activities for the children.

Hag Sameach--have a most wonderful, enjoyable Pesach with your family.

