

יָדַ! Yachatz • Splitting

On Passover the three pieces of matzah symbolize the two loaves of bread on the Shabbat table, commemorating Shabbat's double portion of manna, plus an additional matzah that we break to remember our slavery and initiate the telling of our story.

Talk about it: If matzah teaches simplicity, what foods might we want to enjoy during Passover? If matzah suggests that we enslave ourselves to the excesses of our culture, what excesses or additives might we want to avoid during Passover?

Talk about it: Are there ways you feel broken or disconnected? How might you help heal the brokenness?



Matzah is the central symbol of Passover; Passover is even called *chag hamatzot*, the holiday of matzah.

Matzah is the simplest of all foods—wheat and water, humble pie. It is parched, dry, and unassuming like the desert. When we consider matzah relative to bread, one of its meanings becomes clear. Bread is the puffed-up version of wheat, far removed from the flour and the earth from which it comes. In the context of Passover, bread symbolizes the additives and excesses that weigh us down and enslave us. Matzah reminds us of what bread would like us to forget.

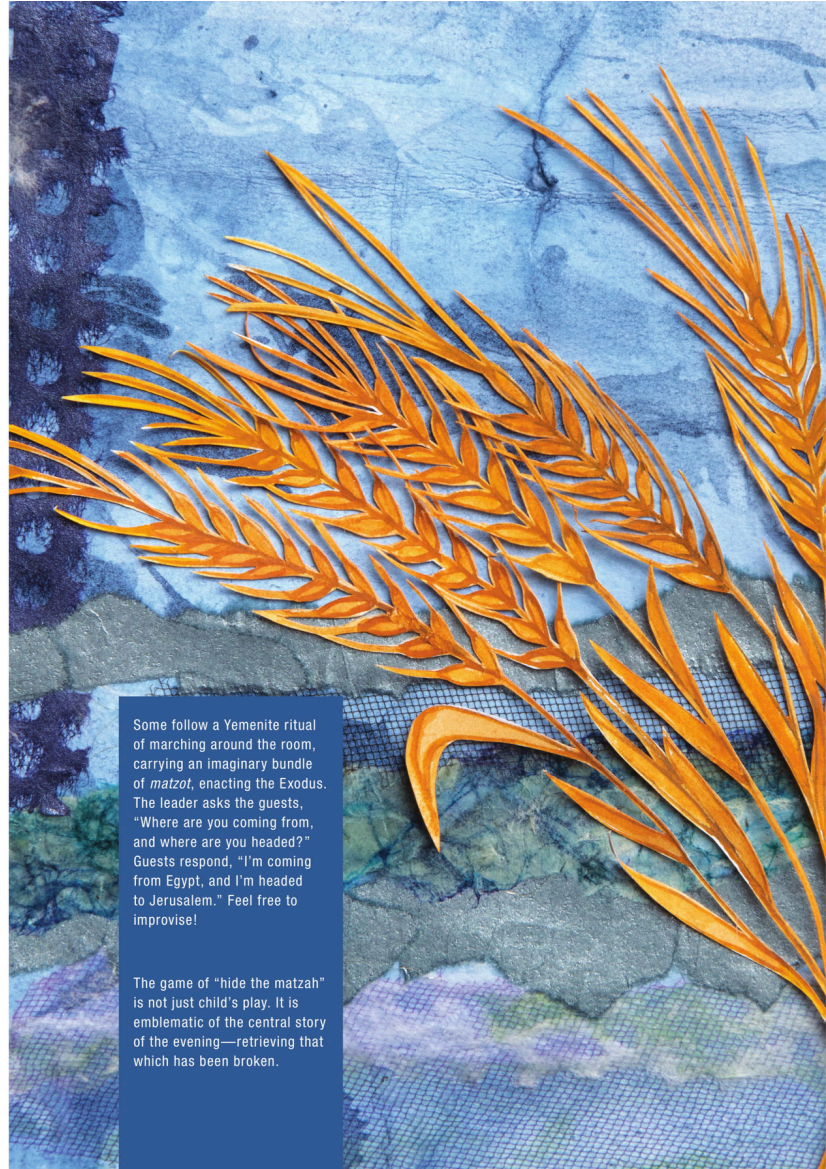
Passover is the path back to basics—the earth, the wheat, and water—and our essential selves. Passover teaches that freedom comes when we rid ourselves of the burden of too much. For now, we simply admire the matzah and reflect on it—the root food of our peoplehood.

BREAK THE MIDDLE OF THE THREE MATZOT INTO TWO PIECES. RETURN THE SMALLER PIECE BACK TO THE PILE, AND SET ASIDE THE LARGER PIECE FOR THE AFIKOMAN.

The broken matzah is symbolic of our own brokenness and the brokenness of the world. Some of us have broken with the past—we may have lost a sense of history and a connection to our ancestors. Others may feel broken or detached from our earthy home. We may have lost touch with the natural world and all that it gives us freely each day.

The whole matzah represents wholeness and freedom—it is the food of liberation that the Israelites ate as they hurried out of Egypt. It helps us to retrieve lost parts of ourselves so we may become whole again.

WRAP THE AFIKOMAN IN A NAPKIN AND HIDE IT.



Some follow a Yemenite ritual of marching around the room, carrying an imaginary bundle of *matzot*, enacting the Exodus. The leader asks the guests, "Where are you coming from, and where are you headed?" Guests respond, "I'm coming from Egypt, and I'm headed to Jerusalem." Feel free to improvise!

The game of "hide the matzah" is not just child's play. It is emblematic of the central story of the evening—retrieving that which has been broken.



Why tell this story? The Torah charges us to tell the story for the children, so that it is transmitted from one generation to the next. We also tell the story to remind ourselves of our past, to make meaning of our present, and to consider what slavery and freedom mean today.

מגיד Maggid • Telling

The word *haggadah* derives from the Hebrew word *l'haggid*, which means “to tell.” It is related to the word *maggid*, which means “story” or “telling.” We tell the Passover story to remember who we are and where we came from.

REMOVE THE CLOTH COVERING THE MATZOT SO THEY ARE IN PLAIN VIEW DURING THE TELLING OF THE STORY. RAISE THE THREE MATZOT, POINT TO THE BROKEN MIDDLE PIECE, AND RECITE TOGETHER:

הָא לַחֲמַת עֲנִיָּא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֵתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם.
Ha lachma anya di achalu avbatana b'ar'a d'Mitzrayim.

This is the bread of affliction
that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.
All who are hungry, come and eat.
All who are in need, come and enjoy the Pesach (Passover) meal.
Now we are here; next year in the Land of Israel.
Now we are slaves; next year—free people.

On one hand, matzah represents our poverty; on the other, it signifies our freedom. The ancient rabbis said that a fundamental requirement for fulfilling the Passover obligation was to tell the story of moving from degradation to freedom, and that story is told right here in the matzah.

Talk about it: Can telling a story set you free? Can telling a story hinder your sense of freedom? Can language change you?

The telling of our story begins with wide-open arms. The seder bids us to invite those who are hungry to partake of our meal. It also bids us to invite those who are hungry in spirit—lonely, lost, heartsick. We bring everybody into the circle, regardless of gender, sexuality, race, age, and religion. The freedom we aspire to depends on our sharing.