

“Ma Nishtana” - Why is this Seder different from all other Seders?

An Online Lesson Plan Adjusted for Distance Learning

Everything will probably be different this Passover eve, we will not be able to celebrate it with our extended family, sit together with everyone around the same table, sing, eat and read the Haggadah as we do every year. It will be hard this year, for those who are used to buying new holiday clothes and gifts for family members to do so. We are not even sure we will be able to get all the groceries we need to prepare the traditional holiday meal. While many families are happy during the holiday season, others find it more complicated; people who don't have family members, divorced parents, elderly people and others. This year, in these Corona times, the conditions of these people may be even more difficult than in the past.



The Four Questions (Ma Nishtana) from the Sarajevo Haggadah, [WikiMedia Commons](#)

All the children that have had to adapt in such a short period to so many changes will also have to adapt to the idea that Passover Eve will be different this year. These changes can cause fear, frustration and sadness but change can also be an opportunity for innovation and creativity. We can help the children by initiating an open conversation with them about Passover Eve, thinking with them together about creative ways that will allow us to maintain the tradition even in a time of such great change.

Tools such as Google Meeting, ZOOM etc can be used in order to apply this lesson. The Ministry of Education's [Remote Learning](#) website has posted instruction manuals.



Part I

Ask your students to pair into couples and share either what they like about Passover or a good memory they have from a past Passover Eve. There are also those who do not like Passover and they should also be invited to share their feelings. Following the conversation, each couple will be asked to share with the class one thing they both have in common with regard to Passover eve and one thing that is different between them. For example: different Passover traditions or the different feelings they have towards the holiday. Students divided into pairs can be asked to communicate via WhatsApp, over the phone or by using "Zoom Rooms".

The students will be asked the following questions:

- What will be different at my families Passover Eve this year?
- What will stay the same?
- How do they feel about this Passover eve?

Students will share their answers in a ZOOM Room, WhatsApp or through chat. Everyone will read the answers and with our encouragement and support each student will respond personally to the rest of the students. Eventually we will gather the main topics that came up in the conversation through inclusive statements that will give room for all the emotions that have arisen.

Part II

Ask the students: What makes them happy about this Passover? Are there any benefits to this Passover? Ask them to think about creative ideas of how to celebrate.

Give the students an asynchronous assignment: Open a chart in a joint document in which students can write at their convenience during the days before Passover Eve. The table will be parted in to two: In one section, students will write **benefits** of this Passover eve that come to mind and in the other they will write **solutions:** Creative Suggestions and Ideas How to Celebrate: how to Feel close when we have to keep distance?

An example Table:

Benefits of Passover eve during Corona times	
Solution, Suggestions, Ideas for having Passover eve in Corona times	



One suggestion we have for Passover is a [digital holiday interactive greeting card](#) that includes a wide variety of content about Passover we created and collected for all of you: teachers, students and the rest of the family. The card includes lesson plans, family activities, games, stories, songs and other rich holiday content. The card is easy, simple and convenient to use and is aimed for everyone. You are invited to share it with fellow teachers and families. Use it, expand your mind and increase the joy of the holiday. May we have a happy Passover!

For high school students we propose to use inspiring texts from other challenging times (while acknowledging the differences of course) where people had difficulty celebrating Passover eve. The text should encourage a sense of power, creativity and optimism. After reading the text students will have an open conversation about the meaning and importance Passover eve had in the time the text was written, the meaning it has for us in our daily lives and in this particular time we face now: what are the values and essences of Passover we want to preserve during this period?

- "... One of the girls who were brought to Auschwitz at that summer of 1944 was from a Hasidic home. She brought with her a small Siddur book that was given to her by her Hasidic father. On the inside cover of the book a list of dates of all the Jewish holidays was handwritten. A few days before Passover eve, as noted in the list, we asked the Hasidic girl how she thinks we can have Passover eve without a single matzka, in all the mess and dirt of the hut? A day before Passover, in the late evening, the girl told us that we will have our holiday dinner after midnight, just like the Anusim of Spain did. She asked us to imagine the taste of matzka and wine and having all the ceremony accessories that we use in our own family home. "I will read the Haggadah from the Siddur book", said the Hungarian girl. Everyone will light the Passover candles in their imagination, I will pray on the wine glass and you will lick your finger tasting it with your lips as you would if you were drinking the Kiddush wine, and then you will say "Amen!" It was a night filled with canned food that I will remember for the rest of my life. Passover dinner lasted until morning. Because of our fear of being interrupted in the middle, the Chassidic girl skipped a few verses of the Haggadah and we ended with "The Passover meal has been completed correctly" and "Next year in Jerusalem!" (From: The Holocaust Studies Institute, ["Teach your Son of Passover in the time of the Holocaust,"](#) a testimony of Golda Katz Kibel)