



To Do and To Think About: Preparing Yourself for Passover

There is so much to do to get ready for Passover. If your family is hosting or attending a Seder there is food to prepare or gifts to purchase. Perhaps you rid your house of *chametz* (items including leavening), clean extra carefully, or buy special food to consume during the weeklong festival.

For many, preparation can seem arduous, made up mostly of physical tasks. For others, getting into the right frame of mind can be challenging. Below, you'll find a calendar of suggested questions and activities to think about and do from the 1st of Nisan until the 15th, Seder night. With these suggestions, we hope to add to your spiritual and intellectual preparation for the holiday. Sometimes, the "**to do**" comes before the "**to think about**"; sometimes it's the other way around; we don't mind the inconsistency, it mirrors what most of our lives look like.

1st of Nisan

To Do:

It's a new month; why not try a **new ritual**? Choose a Jewish home ritual you haven't done before (or haven't done consistently) and commit to doing it for the two weeks leading up to Passover. A few possibilities: say *Shema* before going to sleep each night or *Modeh Ani* when you wake up in the morning or say *motzi* before eating meals.

To Think About:

How does adding ritual change something that is usually a very normal, perhaps boring, part of your everyday life? (Some Jews have the custom of saying a prayer when they are leaving the bathroom, thanking God that their body works properly.)

2nd of Nisan

To Do:

Prepare to be the **storyteller** at your family's Seder. You can draw a comic to share (find ideas about creating comics [here](#)), create puppets representing the main characters, prepare props, or think about who might take roles in a dramatic re-enactment.

To Think About:

What is an **important story** in the life of your **family**? With whom can you share it?

3rd of Nisan

To Think About:

During the Seder, we recite ***Ha Lachma Anya***, "the bread of affliction" our ancestors ate when they were slaves in Egypt, and invites anyone who is hungry to come and eat. Why do you think this portion of the Haggadah is in Aramaic, instead of Hebrew? What can you do to bring people who might be outsiders into your community?

To Do:

Do something for someone in **transition**; perhaps a refugee or someone who is homeless, moving, or starting a new job or a new family. You might: pack boxes, gather gently used items, bring someone a meal, or offer to do simple chores. (Remember to ask the person what might feel helpful to them.)

4th of Nisan

To Do:

Learn the **four questions** in **Hebrew** or another language, especially if there will be guests at the Seder whose first language isn't English. "300 Ways to ask the Four Questions" by Murray Spiegeleisen and Rickey Stein is a great resource.

To Think About:

Come up with **four new questions** to ask at the Seder. What are some things about Passover or the Exodus story you've always wondered about?



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5th of Nisan

To Think About:

Passover recalls the journey from **slavery** to **freedom**. What are you a slave to? (Is there something that you feel takes up a great deal of your time or energy, though you may not feel it adds to your happiness or productivity?)

To Do:

In the Passover Seder, **slavery** is represented by **charoset**, a mix of fruit, nuts and wine, meant to mimic the mortar used in building the pyramids. Try a **different charoset recipe**. You can find a number of them [here](#).

6th of Nisan

To Think About:

Shifrah and Puah were midwives who, instead of following Pharaoh's order to kill all of the male children born among the Israelites, saved Moses' life. In honor of their **civil disobedience**, think about a **cause** that's important to you. What would you **stand up** for?

To Do:

Do something to **support** the cause you believe in: write a letter, make a donation, call your elected official, educate someone else about why the cause is worthy of attention.

7th of Nisan

To Think About:

As the Passover narrative is beginning, Moses encounters the **burning bush**. Some say that the bush had been burning for years and years until someone, Moses in this case, noticed it. What do you **overlook** that might be worth a few moments of your **attention**? What is **changing** right in front of you?

To Do:

Take a **walk in nature**. Notice the **signs of spring**. How is the season changing? What is **different** today than it was yesterday?

8th of Nisan

To Think About:

After successfully crossing the Sea of Reeds, the Children of Israel sing a joyful song, *Shirat Hayam* (Song of the Sea) part of the **Mi Chamocha** prayer. We learn from the Torah that the women brought musical instruments, namely **timbrels**, or tambourines. If they were **escaping Egypt in haste**, why do you think they packed musical instruments?

To Do:

To Do: Learn a **new tune** to a classic Passover **song**. If you play an **instrument**, learn to play a song you might already know.

9th of Nisan

To Do:

Make **Matzah**. Remember, the **entire process**, from the time the water hits the flour, until the matzah is baked, is only **18 minutes**. You can find **instructions** [here](#).

To Think About:

As slaves in Egypt, the Children of Israel didn't have control over their own. During the Seder meal, we **recline** and eat in a leisurely way, which helps us to be mindful of our **freedom**. When are you **relaxed** during meals and when do you feel rushed? What are the relative **benefits** of eating in each manner?



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10th of Nisan

To Think About:

Which of the **four children** (wise, wicked, simple, does not even know to ask) do you think you are most like? Does this change, given the setting and circumstances?

To Do:

Take **pictures** of yourself dressed as, or posing like, each of the **four children**. Share them with your **religious school classmates** or with guests at the Seder.

11th of Nisan

To Think About:

In retelling the story of Passover, we often repeat that the Children of Israel were "strangers in a strange land." Think about a time in your life when you **felt** like a **stranger**.

To Do:

Introduce yourself to someone you don't know in your **school** or **synagogue** community.

12th of Nisan

To Think About:

We read in the Torah that God sent plagues to afflict the Egyptians to show his power and importance. In what ways are you **powerful** and **important**?

To Do:

Create or gather representations of the **ten plagues**. (You might use stuffed animals for cattle disease, and bubble wrap for boils. Get creative!)

13th of Nisan

To Do:

Clean out your backpack or desk drawer, or any other place where you are likely to put things and then forget about them for weeks and months at a time. If you choose, fill the newly-cleaned backpack with items you might take if you were fleeing Egypt on short notice. You can share these at your Seder.

To Think About:

While **physically** cleaning their houses to rid them of **chametz**, many people engage in a **spiritual cleansing**, taking an **accounting** of all they have done well and might do better in the months since their last accounting on Yom Kippur.

14th of Nisan

To Do:

Search for **Chametz**. It is traditional to search at **nighttime** on the day before the Seder. More complete directions can be found [here](#).

To Think About:

What **negative phrase** do you have playing in your head? With what might you replace it?

15th of Nisan

To Think About:

Chag Pesach Sameach –Have a **Happy Passover**.

To Do:

Enjoy your **Seder**!