

The 15-Minute Positive Passover Seder

Using the teachings of Positive Judaism to guide your seder

Rabbi Darren Levine, Founding Rabbi
Tamid: The Downtown Synagogue, New York, New York
tamidnyc.org

Passover is about stories and questions and lends itself naturally to the core teachings of Positive Judaism, a new approach that leads people to live with more gratitude, hope, awe, inspiration, courage, love, and joy. Regardless of your background or level of Jewish observance, this guide pairs the essence of the Passover Seder with universal human strengths and values. The same strengths and values displayed by the Israelites in the ancient day are the very same strengths that we can draw on today to lead positive lives.

You're invited to deepen the conversation around your seder table by reacting to the values and wisdom texts in each section. Finally, the action suggestions are designed to add meaning and fun to your seder for all ages. Enjoy!

1. Gratitude: Welcome and Candle Lighting (3 minutes)

"We welcome you to this seder and as we kindle these festival lights, we are **grateful** to be here with each other, sharing our lives together, humbly mindful of the gift of light and life." Rabbi Nachman of Brestlov taught, "**gratitude** rejoices with her sister joy and is always ready to light a candle and have a party. **Gratitude** doesn't much like the old cronies of boredom, despair, and taking life for granted."

Action: Kindle the lights and hold hands in a circle around your table and invite each person express something for which they are **grateful**.

2. Resilience: Blessing for Wine: Kiddush (2 minute)

"We lift this cup of wine in honor of the Israelites who suffered under the yoke of slavery and for demonstrating **resilience** in the face of bondage." **Resilience** is the ability to remain active, energetic, focused, and flexible no matter what life presents. The inspiration for resilience is found in the words of Zechariah, "Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit alone."

Action: For fun, lift your neighbors glass to their mouth for them to drink by your hand.

3. Kindness: The Unleavened Matzah (2 minutes)

"This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate before they were free. Let us show unwavering **love and kindness** to all who are hungry and enslaved today. We are all called in every generation to remember the Exodus "as if you were still a slave in Egypt." The Torah teaches, "great is the virtue of **love and kindness**. (*Exodus 34:6*).

Action: 1-minute break to text someone you know to express your love to them.

4. Perseverance: The Middle Matzah = The Afikomen (1 minute)

“We set aside a broken piece of matzah that will become the afikomen to teach the value of **perseverance**, knowing that what seems broken may be repaired.” Break a piece of matzah to honor the **perseverance** of the Israelites and their ability to complete the task and to persist in the face of obstacles. The Akaedat Yitzchat taught that “personal effort and **perseverance** contribute the major part to eventual success. In fact, any negligence or laziness is rated as sinful when circumstances seem to have called for exertion of the self.”

Action: Hide the Afikomen now while the others move to #5. After dinner, commence the search.

5. Bravery: The Hillel Sandwich: Motzi/Matzah/Maror/Charoset (3 minute)

“The combination of the matzah, maror, and charoset teach us that life can be dry, sweet, and sometimes bitter. Yet when we rise to the challenge with **bravery**, we can accomplish great things. Ben Zoma taught: Who is **brave**? Those who conquer their evil impulse. As it is written: “Those who are slow to anger are better than the mighty, and those who rule over their spirit than those who conquer a city.” (*Pirke Avot 4:1*). Make a Hillel sandwich and enjoy.

Action: Think of something that needs to be corrected in your life and commit, with **bravery**, to improving it.

6. Spirituality: Open the Door for Elijah (2 minutes)

“We now open the door” for the Prophet Elijah which symbolizes hope for a better world for all people. With a gesture of **spiritual** positivity, we honor our faith in a higher purpose and an interest in the unknowable and unseen. Judaism teaches that the Creator has opened three gates to mankind so that they may enter into the domain of **spirituality**, ethical conduct and the laws divine, that guide us in our works and daily life to health of body and mind and soul. (*Duties of the Heart, Bahya Ibn Pakuda*)

Action: Open the door for Elijah and pour the prophet a cup of wine.

7. Love: The Passover Seder Meal (2 minute introduction)

“And now it is time to eat. The mealtime is the perfect opportunity to express our feelings of neighborly **love** for everyone at this table as we share in the festive meal together and engage in positive conversations that enhance your seder. The Torah teaches, and you shall **love** your neighbor as yourself. (*Leviticus 19:18*)

Action: Clap and cheer in appreciation to your seder leader! Now, eat, drink, and be joyful. It is a mitzvah to laugh, have fun, and be happy on Passover. Happy Passover!