

The Complete Positive Passover Seder Guide

Using the teachings of Positive Judaism to enhance your seder

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Passover is about stories and rituals 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. This guide pairs the essence of the Passover Seder with exceptional 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. The guide can be used by the leader, distributed to everyone at your seder table, or used in your own creative way. At any time, you're invited to deepen the conversation around your seder table by reacting to the values and wisdom texts in each section. May your Passover Seder raise the level of positivity in your lives and the ones you love. Happy Passover!

1. Gratitude: Welcome, Candle Lighting, Opening Prayers

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 Breslov 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."

2. Resilience: First Cup of Wine: *Kadeish*

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."

3. Appreciation of Beauty: Washing the Hands: *Ur'chatz*

We wash our hands with water to remind us to **appreciate** the flow of time, nature, and beauty. Rabbi Hanina said, "Everything is in the hand of heaven except the awe of heaven, as it is written, 'and now, O Israel, what does the Eternal your God demand of you? Only this: to be in **awe**. (*Talmud Brachot 33b*)"

4. Humility: The Greens and Salt Water: *Karpas*

We dip the greens in salt water to remind us of our ancestors' tears and the **humility** of being enslaved to a greater power. The Tanna de be Eliyahu teaches, "let everyone be **humble** in Torah and good works, **humble** with his parents, teacher, and wife, with his children, with his household, with his kinsfolk near and far, even with the heathen in the street, so that he become beloved on high and desired on earth."

5. Perseverance: The Middle Matzah (afikomen): *Yachatz*

"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." The broken matzah honors the **perseverance** of the

Israelites and their ability to persist in the face of great hardship and challenge. 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.”

6. Kindness: The Story of Matzah: *Magid*

“This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate on their journey to freedom. 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 we were still slaves in Egypt.” The Torah teaches, “great is the virtue of **love and kindness**. (*Exodus 34:6*).

7. Perspective: The Four Questions: *Mah Nishtanah*

Why is tonight different than all other nights? Because tonight we renew our desire to gain wisdom, have a broad mindset, and to expand our **perspective** of life. As the psalmist says, “Teach us therefore to attain a heart of **wisdom**” (*Psalms 90*).

8. Love of Learning: The Four Children: *Arba Vanim*

The seder tradition speaks of four children: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who does not know to ask. As guides to our children and to the next generation, we hope to instill a **love of learning** and a mindset of growth. As it is written, “My child, do not forget my teaching, but let your mind retain this commandment for it will bestow on you length of days, years of life and well-being” (*Proverbs 3:1-2*).

9. Prudence: Signs and Plagues: *Otot u'Mo'otim*

The ten signs and the plagues caused devastation and simultaneously led to the liberation of the Israelite slaves. In our lifetime, may we always be prudent and show good judgement in our actions as it is written, “a man who strays from the path of **prudence** will rest in the company of ghosts” (*Proverbs. 21: 16*).

10. Hope: It Would Have Been Enough!: *Dayeinu!*

Dayeinu is a song of freedom and calls us to have **hope** and optimism in our lives and dream of a future where every living thing is treated with compassion, generosity, and love. The Psalmist writes, “and I shall always **hope**, and I shall add to all of Your praises” (*Psalms 71:14*).

11. Community: Washing of the Hands: *Rochtzah*

As we turn to the meal and the items on our seder plate, we wash our hands again, this time symbolizing the renewed commitment to the **communities** we choose to support and nourish like family, friends, schools, and our neighborhoods. The Torah teaches that “Moses convened the **whole community** of Israel and said to them . . . everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring gifts.” (*Exodus 35:1-5*). Out of their deep desire to create something together, they eventually brought too much and Moses needed to cease the voluntary donations so the people stopped bringing. Their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done.”

12. Bravery: The Hillel Sandwich: Motzi/Matzah/Maror/Charoset: *Koreich*

The combination of the matzah, maror, and charoset teach us that life can be dry, sweet, and sometimes bitter. Yet when we rise to our challenges 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*).

13. Love: The Passover Seder Meal: *Shulchan Oreikh*

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

14. Fairness: Finding the Afikomen: *Tzafun*

Searching for the hidden afikomen is a highlight for a child’s seder experience and, when done **fairly**, can be one of the most memorable moments of the seder. The Proverbs teach “to know wisdom and instruction; To comprehend the words of understanding; To receive the discipline of wisdom, justice, **fairness**, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion; That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning, And the man of understanding may attain unto wise counsel. (*Prov. 1:1-5*)

15. Contentment: Blessing after the Meal: *Bareich*

We have eaten and are satisfied. Now it is time to give thanks. From the expected to the surprises, it is a strength to be **content** with our experience and to choose to see the positive. We commit to having self-control and disciplining and controlling appetites, emotions, and desire. As the Jewish sages teach, “envy is rotten to the bones” (*Proverbs 14:30*).

16. Joy: Songs of Happiness and Joy: *Hallel*

As our evening comes to a close, we celebrate with **joyful** songs of Psalms of praise and thanksgiving, able to bring lightheartedness, laughter, and smiles to self and to others through jokes, teasing, and play. For “a **joyful** heart makes for good health; despondency dries up the bones.” (*Prov. 17:22*)

17. Spirituality: Open the Door for Elijah, Farewell: *Nirtzah*

As our Passover journey comes to an end, we “open the door” for the Prophet Elijah who symbolizes hope for a better world for all people. Having faith in a higher purpose and expressing connection and interest to the unknowable and unseen is a positive strength. It is taught that three gates the Creator has opened 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*). With a final gesture of positivity, we express our gratitude for those who prepared the seder meal, the seder leader(s), the hosts, the guests, and the Eternal One.

