



IZZY THE WHIZ AND PASSOVER MCCLEAN

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Passover represents a major turning point in Jewish history. The Israelites left a life of slavery and embarked on a journey to freedom and peoplehood.

Cleaning the house to prepare for the holiday is one way to set this time apart and commemorate the dramatic changes brought about by our ancestors' escape from Egypt.

Matzah, a quickly-baked unleavened bread, is the central symbol of Passover. Often referred to as “the bread of affliction,” it represents the Israelites’ hurried exit from a life of slavery. *Hametz* is the opposite of matzah. It is wheat or grain that has been allowed to rise. Bread, cookies, and pasta are examples of hametz. There are various interpretations of matzah and hametz that help bring meaning to the holiday. Some see hametz representing a life of fullness and freedom. Many Jews refrain from eating hametz throughout Passover as a tangible reminder of the slavery experienced by our ancestors.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING:

- What kinds of cleaning tasks are you good at doing?
- How long does it take to clean one kitchen drawer? Get a timer, and ... go!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Getting ready for Passover is the ultimate spring cleaning ritual. Many families attempt to clean every nook and cranny of the house. Izzy’s mother is overwhelmed with this task, but cleaning can be a fun family experience. Make a game of cleaning unusual spaces such as the family car, the bottom of a closet, or the insides of pockets.

The night before Passover is traditionally the time for bedikat hametz, a symbolic seek-and-destroy mission in which families search their homes to ensure that all hametz has been removed. For this fun custom, gather the following: a candle, a feather, a wooden spoon, and a paper bag. (Kits are often sold in Judaica shops.) Typically an adult hides ten crackers or pieces of hametz around the house. At nightfall the search begins. With assistance, children use the candle to illuminate dimly-lit spaces. As each piece of hametz is found, the feather and spoon are used to sweep it into the paper bag. The search concludes the next morning with the recitation of a blessing and burning the hametz.