

Passover: Jewish holiday of freedom



Tasha Robinson sings and claps during a portion of the Hillel School festivities.

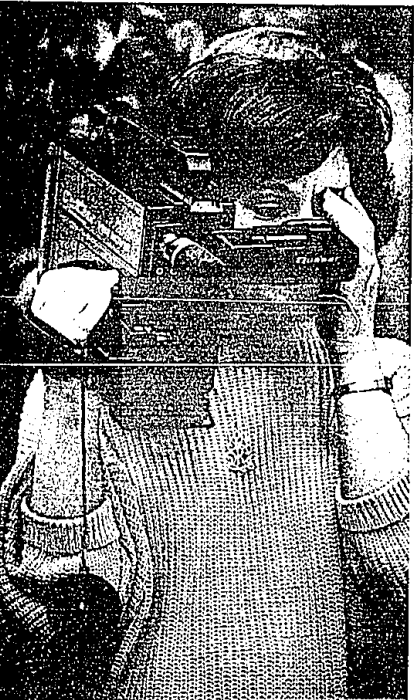


photos by RANDY UORST/staff photographer

Aaron Fishman, wearing a yarmulke as all boys who participated in the service did, reads a selection from the Haggadah.



Suzanne Shumaker helps son Scott read from the Haggadah.



Marilyn Borrie videotapes her daughter Jodi during the seder service.

FIRST GRADERS at Hillel Day School in Farmington Hills held a model seder Monday in observance of the Jewish holiday of Passover, which began at sundown Wednesday and runs for eight days.

"Passover is the Jewish holiday of freedom," said Hillel teacher Shula Fleischer. "At this time, Jews remember others throughout the world who are not free. They hope and pray that soon they too will have freedom."

More than 100 students, parents and teachers were on hand for the afternoon seder.

During the first two days and the last two days (Reform and Humanistic members, the first and last days only), many children do not attend school and many adults refrain from work. Activities continue as usual during the middle four days.

Passover commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery, circa 1480 B.C.E. and the Israelites' resultant exodus from Egypt.

Moses, as leader of the Jewish people in Egypt, asked Pharaoh to "let my people go." When Pharaoh refused, a series of 10 plagues, each one worse than the one before, were brought against the people of Egypt, but each time Pharaoh refused.

The 10th plague was the death of all first-born males in Egypt. The angel of death slew every first-born Egyptian male, but "passed over" the homes of the Jews.

IN THEIR haste to leave Egypt, the Israelites did not have time to let their dough for bread-baking rise. To this day, unleavened bread is eaten during the eight days of Passover.

Passover is observed each year as a reminder to Jews that the Children of Israel were delivered by God from slavery in Egypt. It is also a reminder to all Jews that because their forefathers were freed, they too were delivered from slavery unto Pharaoh.

The first two nights of Passover are celebrated in Jewish homes with a feast called the seder. The word seder literally means "order" of the service. It is a ceremonial dinner marked by the retelling of the story of the Exodus from Egypt through the use of prayers, songs and ceremonial foods.

A special book, the Haggadah, is used during the seder. The word Haggadah means "the telling" of the story or narrative. It is a book which has emerged over the centuries fixing the rituals of the seder.

The head of the household serves as the leader of the seder, directing the reading of the Haggadah. Everyone present participates, including the youngest person present, who recites Four Questions. The Haggadah tells the story of Passover through the answers to the Four Questions.

NO LEAVENED bread is eaten during Passover. In addition, certain other foods containing yeast or other leavening agents are forbidden by Jewish law to be eaten at that time. All such forbidden foods are removed from the home no later than noon on the day before Passover begins.

Separate dishes, silverware and cooking utensils are customarily used during the eight-day celebration.

Matzah, unleavened bread, is eaten throughout the seder. Three matzahs are placed on the seder plate and covered or placed in a cloth container. The seder plate is a large one, usually decorated, which has a place for each of the seder foods.

As a reminder of the lamb ritually slaughtered and then eaten by Jewish families on the eve of Passover in Biblical times, a roasted

lamb bone is placed on the seder plate.

Horseradish are the bitter herbs that is a reminder of the bitterness of slavery. Charoset, a sweet mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine, symbolizes the mortar made to hold together the bricks the Jews produced while slaves in Egypt. Karpas is a green vegetable, usually parsley or celery, used to symbolize spring and renewal. It is dipped in salt water, which symbolizes the tears of the Jews in Egypt.

A ROASTED egg is also placed on the Seder as a token of grief for the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

A special cup of wine is placed on the seder table for the prophet Elijah.

According to Jewish tradition, Elijah is the messenger of God who will foretell the coming of the Messiah. During the service, there is a time when the door of the house is opened and Elijah is invited to enter.

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