



Dayenu Cartoon, 1977

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This is a cartoon that was published in the March 24, 1977 edition of The Chicago Sentinel. The cartoon depicts the beginning of the Passover Seder. The Seder is one of the most commonly celebrated Jewish home rituals, comprising a festive meal that includes many readings and customs connected to the retelling of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. Traditionally, the child asks the parent four questions to start off what are typically long discussions about the Passover story.

- How would you describe the expressions on the adult faces?
- What does this cartoon suggest about the differences between the older and younger generations?
- What are the challenges of transmitting stories from one generation to the next?
- How do you find the balance between old and new, past and present, traditional and contemporary?
- What role does each generation play in the chain of transmission?

The educational goal of the Passover Seder is the transmission of the Exodus story from one generation to the next. As it says in Exodus, "And you shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what God did for me when I went free from Egypt.' "

The importance of passing on Jewish traditions and stories to the next generation is not limited to Seder night. There is a well-known biblical commandment that "you shall teach them [the Torah laws and values] diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them, as you sit in your home and as you walk on your way outside, when you lie down and when you awaken" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). The family, primarily, parents, are responsible for teaching their children the traditions, laws, and values of Judaism.



Rav Slonim Testing his Great-Grandson

Abraham Schwadron Collection, NLI

The Slonim family was a prominent Hasidic family living in Hebron from the mid-1800s until the 1929 riots. This is a photograph of Rabbi Mordechai Dov Ber Slonim (1840–1915) giving his great-grandson, Eliezer Dan Slonim (1900–1929), a test in Torah studies, both dressed in traditional Hasidic garb. There is a long tradition of motivating children to study through rewards and praise. Maimonides (1135–1204), one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of all time, advises motivating a child by promising, “read, and I will give you a nut or a fig.”

- What words would you use to describe the expressions on each of their faces?
- What does this photograph suggest about the place of Jewish education and family in Jewish life?
- How does this photograph compare to the dynamic depicted in the Dayenu cartoon?

The Jewish Life Cycle



Shana Tova card, New York 1910

Joseph and Margit Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection, Folklore Research Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

This new year’s card portrays the circle of life in ten stages. The cycle begins in the bottom right corner with a baby sitting in a cradle, followed by a two-year old taking his first steps, a three-year-old boy riding a tricycle, a six-year-old ready for school, a thirteen-year-old celebrating his Bar Mitzvah, a twenty-year-old standing under the wedding canopy, a thirty-year-old with a young family, a fifty-year-old man on his own, a seventy-year-old bent over with a walking stick, and finally a ninety-year-old with his grandson.

- This card was created by and for Jews who immigrated to the United States from Europe. How might being an immigrant influence one generation’s relationship with the next?
- What can you learn about Jewish values of family and education from this image?
- Notice that this card focuses on the life cycle of the boy/man. How would a picture drawn today, in your community, be similar or different in comparison to this image?



Grandfather Blessing Children, 1914

Ephemera Collection

This postcard, published in Vienna in 1914, shows an old man with his hands on the heads of his two grandchildren. At the bottom of the photograph are two captions in German: one reads "The Grandfather's Blessing" and the other Wilhelm Wachtel, the name of the artist. Underneath the picture there is a verse from Genesis 48:16: "May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless these youths." This verse is an excerpt from the blessing that Jacob gave to his two grandsons, Ephraim and Menashe, on his deathbed. Many Jewish parents bless their children every Friday night using the following text:

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe (for boys)

May God make you like Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah (for girls)

May God bless you and watch over you.

May God shine His face toward you and show you favor.

May God be favorably disposed toward you, and may He grant you peace.

According to the 19th-century Rabbi Shmuel Hominer, the reason this blessing specifically refers to Ephraim and Menashe (and not the patriarchs) is because they remained faithful to their family tradition despite growing up in Egyptian culture. Parents continue to evoke these names hoping to successfully pass on the tradition to their children even amid external influences.

- The traditional blessing for children includes laying one's hands on the child's head, as shown in this postcard. What do you think is the significance of this physical ritual?
- Why do you think this blessing invokes the names of biblical characters?
- What does this tradition suggest about the role of children in Jewish life and family?
- Are there rituals or routines that your parents instilled in you from an early age?

Experiences That Last



Lag Ba'omer Picnic, Latvia, 1933

Courtesy of Centropa Archive

This is a photograph taken in 1933 in Ludza of Hana Rayzberg and her classmates with their teacher, Ms. Ella, on a Lag Ba'Omer picnic. Hana described her childhood in her oral testimony:

I was born on 1st January 1927 and was given the name of Hana-Leya after my paternal grandmother. My parents were religious and observed all the Jewish traditions. My family went to the synagogue on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays. We spoke Yiddish at home. We celebrated Jewish holidays according to the rules. Adults talked and sang Jewish songs, and children played in the yard. At the age of six I went to the preparatory grade of the Jewish school. We learned to read and write in Hebrew. We had Hebrew classes every day, and all subjects were taught in Yiddish. I studied in this school for six years. We also had religious classes where we studied the Tanakh and Torah. I did well at school. I had a happy childhood. These were the happiest years in my life.

- In her oral testimony, Hana speaks about learning both Yiddish and Hebrew. What role does language play in passing on tradition?
- Hanna describes how she learned some aspects of Jewish life from her family and others at school. What is the difference between learning from home and learning at school? Are there specific things that you have learned in one place or the other?
- Often, immersive experiences that involve multiple senses are more memorable, and can play a central part in forming one's identity. Share an outdoor/multi-sense experience that relates to your Jewish identity and that made a memorable impression on you.