

Benjy's Messy Room

By Barbara Diamond Goldin | Illustrated by Rita Tan

READING & ACTIVITY GUIDE

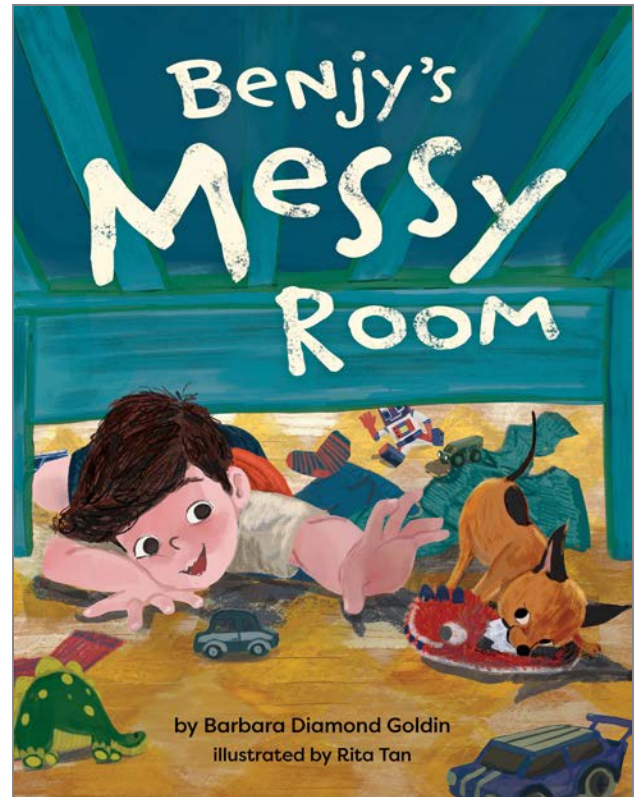
About the Book

Passover starts tomorrow, and Benjy's room is a mess. His race car set, his superheroes, and his firetruck are spread across his room, along with all his other toys. Benjy knows he needs to clean his room if he wants to take part in the breadcrumb hunt, a ritual also called b'dikat chameitz. His family does it every year. During Passover, Jews will only eat flat, unleavened matzah to remember the story of the ancient Israelites who left slavery in Egypt so quickly that their bread didn't have time to rise. To get into the holiday spirit, Benjy's parents hide breadcrumbs in the house to be found and swept up with a feather, as they rid the house of leavened bread.

Benjy really wants to join the breadcrumb hunt, but cleaning his room is too big of a task. It's overwhelming. That's when Shira, his younger sister, comes in and asks to play. Benjy says he can't, but when Shira insists, Benjy concedes. He takes pieces of paper and balls them up, hiding them around his room. They make a game out of practicing for tonight and get so absorbed into the game that Benjy hardly notices it's almost sundown and he hasn't cleaned it room yet!

Or has he? While looking for the balls of paper, Benjy and Shira had been picking up all his toys and putting them away. It's Benjy's big sister Naomi who shows him how much he's accomplished and helps him to finish the rest. Benjy is able to clean his room in time, and can lead the breadcrumb hunt, thanks to help from his sisters and from turning a chore into a game.

An author's note at the end of the book includes information on Passover, the breadcrumb hunt, and a special prayer Benjy teaches Shira.



Key Themes:

Cleaning; Helping family; Making chores fun; Sibling relationships

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Ages 4–7 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children.

Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- Read the title of the book and look at cover illustration. Using those two clues, what do you think this book will be about?
- Look at the three people's expressions on the cover. What do you think each person is feeling? Are they feeling the same way or differently?

After Reading

- Describe your own room. What do you love about it? What do you wish was different? How does it compare to Benjy's room?
- Benjy has the "big job" of cleaning up his room. What big jobs do you have to do in your house? How do you feel about doing each one?
- In the story, Shira learns a new Hebrew blessing. It can be hard to learn something new like that, but for Shira it was easy. What do you think made it easy for Shira to learn it?

Optional: Extension Activity

Benjy and Shira had fun cleaning up Beni's room because they made it into a game. Pick a big job that you have to get done, and try these things to game-ify it. Get it done while having fun.

- Put on one or two of your favorite songs, and GO! Can you get your job done before the last note?
- If your job is something that you have to do more than once a week (like making your bed or doing your homework) then try making a sticker chart. Each time you complete the job, put a sticker on the chart. When the chart is full, celebrate with your family by doing something fun, like getting a pizza or watching a movie together.
- For Educators: Make a grab bag with objects that symbolize each part of the classroom (a small block for the block corner; a circle magnet for the circle time rug). Ask students to each pick an object from the grab bag. Whichever object they pick is their job to tidy up.

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CHARACTER CUT OUTS



