

# Roadside Seder

By Anna Levine | Illustrated by Naama Lahav

# READING GUIDE

## About the Book

In a story about community, problem-solving, and flexibility, young Benjy helps bring everyone together to share in the Passover holiday, even if it isn't how they planned to hold their seder.

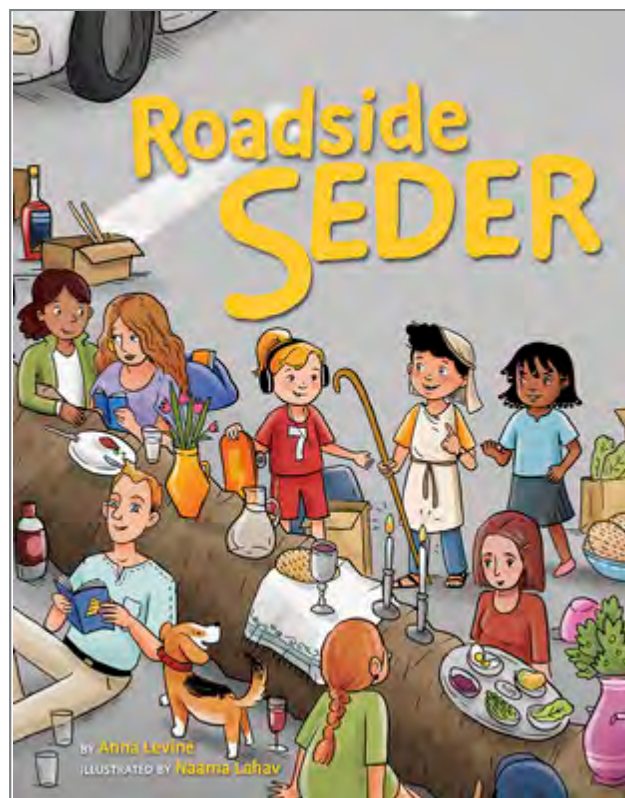
When a fallen palm tree blocks a highway in Israel on the afternoon before Passover, Benjy's family is stuck in a massive traffic jam. Benjy's family tries to move the tree, but it won't budge. They get help from the other travelers, but still no luck. Everyone is resigned to give up and accept that Passover is ruined.

But Benji saves the day! Why is this night different from all other nights? Because they can celebrate Passover together on the side of the road! Everyone pitches in their food and supplies, sharing in their diverse Jewish cultures, to have Seder on the trunk of this pesky palm tree.

When the prickly palm table was set, and everybody was seated, Benjy took the stage. "Welcome one and all to this roadside Passover seder. Like our ancestors who had to make do—we had to, too!"

**Anna Levine** is an award-winning children's book author. Her YA novel, *Running on Eggs*, was on the New York Public Library's list of best books for teens in 2000. She has published picture books, middle-grade novels, and young adult fiction. Levine has also published short stories, poetry, and non-fiction articles. She was born and raised in Canada and now lives in Israel.

**Naama Lahav** is an illustrator, graphic designer, and artist. She attended Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has illustrated many children's books in Israel and contributed art to magazines and newspapers. She lives in Israel.



## Key Themes:

Passover, Problem Solving, Flexibility, Community and Diversity

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Ages 5–8 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 aloud, then look at the picture on the cover. What holiday do you think this book is about? How do you know?
- Looking at the cover, what do you think is going on? Why do think some people are standing and others sitting? Why do you there is a tree trunk and not a table? What else does the picture make you wonder?

## After Reading

- Have you ever helped picked a name for a pet? A toy? Something else? How did you think up that name? Why did you think the family in the book named their dog "Matzah?" Why do you think the author picked that name for the pet in this book?
- Look at the people celebrating the seder together on the last illustration. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? What can you tell about their jobs or way of life from what they are wearing?
- From the first sentence of the book, we know that the story takes place in Jerusalem, Israel. Do you think this story could take place anywhere else? Why or why not?
- In the book, everyone works together and tries to move the palm tree off the road, but they can't do it. Describe how the characters handled that failure.
- When you have a problem to solve, what do you? Who do you turn to for help?

## Optional: Extension Activity

A seder plate includes several symbolic foods. Here's a way to make your own:

Step 1. Take a paper cup, and trace 6 identical circles onto a piece of paper.

Step 2. Inside each circle, write the name of one of the seder plate foods. (You can find them in the book and at the link below.) You can also draw a picture of each food inside the circles, too.

Step 3. Cut out each circle, and glue or tape them to the bottom of the clear plastic plate.

Step 4. Place a second clear plastic plate on top (so it is safe for food), and you can see the pictures you drew.

Step 5. If you'd like, you can use your seder plate at your family's seder

You can learn more about the seder plate and its foods, and how to arrange them on your plate here:

<https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/passover/learn-about-passover-seder-plate>

*Discussion Questions by Ann Diament Koffsky*



1. For Benjy and his family to move that tree off the road they'll have to be strong. Choose one of your favorite Passover songs and have your students stretch and bend and jump like the frogs in the Passover plague, twist like a storm, or flap their arms like flying locusts. End with a 'tug of war' using a thick rope and two teams pulling each other over a line.
2. Treasure hunt for the Afikomen. Hide the afikomen. Play a game of hot/cold (or use the Hebrew words "cham" "kar" or חם/קר).
3. Eggs are an important part of the seder plate and can also provide fun activities, such as relay races with eggs on spoons or making a big, chopped egg salad (the chopping and mushing being the fun part... and the eating)
4. The Ethiopian tradition of breaking plates is symbolic of starting afresh. Breaking a glass is a Jewish custom at a wedding. But can your students find out how to piece together a broken bowl, like archaeologists do when they try and reconstruct history? Break a flowerpot and then have the students piece it back together.
5. Springtime in Israel is the time when the country turns green with new growth. Plant a 'Biblical garden' with herbs and spices that grow wild in Israel, mint and rosemary and sage and teach your students the Hebrew words for the plants.
6. Learn the words of the song that concludes the Passover seder (L'shana haba'ah b'yirushalyim) through body percussion jamming, such as clapping together hands







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# Character Cut Outs

