

= A Rugrats Passover =

" A Rugrats Passover " is the 26th and final episode of the third season of the American animated television series Rugrats , and its 65th episode overall . It was broadcast originally on April 13 , 1995 , on the cable network Nickelodeon . The plot follows series regulars Grandpa Boris and the babies as they become trapped in the attic on Passover ; to pass the time , Boris tells the Jewish story of the Exodus . During the episode the babies themselves reenact the story , with young Tommy portraying Moses , while his cousin Angelica represents the Pharaoh of Egypt .

" A Rugrats Passover " was directed by Jim Duffy , Steve Socki , and Jeff McGrath from the script by Peter Gaffney , Paul Germain , Rachel Lipman , and Jonathon Greenberg . The episode was conceived in 1992 when Germain responded to a Nickelodeon request for a Rugrats Hanukkah special by creating a Passover episode instead . The episode scored a 3 @.@ 1 Nielsen Rating , making it " the highest @-@ rated show in Nickelodeon 's history " , and received overwhelmingly positive reviews , including from Jewish community publications . It was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award , an Annie Award , and a CableACE Award . The episode also , however , attracted controversy , when the Anti @-@ Defamation League compared the artistic design of the older characters to anti @-@ Semitic drawings from a 1930s Nazi newspaper .

The episode made Rugrats one of the first animated series to focus on a Jewish holiday ; its success precipitated the creation of another special , " A Rugrats Chanukah " , which also attracted critical acclaim . A novelization of the episode was in 2007 exhibited at the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa , Oklahoma .

= = Plot = =

As the episode opens , Tommy and Angelica Pickles and their parents are all gathering to celebrate the Passover Seder at the home of Didi 's parents , Boris and Minka Kropotkin . Stu and Angelica , who are Christians , both find Passover boring , and Angelica argues why she and her parents should be at the Seder at all , especially considering Boris and Minka aren 't actually related to them . Following an argument with Minka about what type of wine glasses they should use ( either the glasses that belonged to Minka 's mother or the ones that belonged Boris 's father ) , Boris storms out of the room ; the two families arrive and Didi tries comforting her mom , who believes Boris has run away .

Boris hasn 't reappeared by the time Tommy 's best friend , Chuckie Finster , and his dad , Chas , arrive to join the celebration ; when the Seder begins the children set off to search for Boris , eventually finding him in the attic . Boris explains that he felt bad about yelling at Minka , and had gone to look for her mother 's wine glasses , but had become locked inside when the door closed behind him ( it can 't open from the inside ) . Angelica tests the door , and inadvertently locks them all in again .

Angelica tells Boris that he 's not really missing anything and admits that she thinks that Passover 's a dumb holiday . Boris tries convincing her otherwise by telling her and the boys the story of the Exodus , hoping to improve their understanding of Passover . As he talks , Angelica imagines herself as the Pharaoh of Egypt , who commands the Hebrew slaves ( imagined as the other Rugrats and numerous other babies ) to throw their newborn sons into the Nile River . One Hebrew slave defies the order by putting her infant son , Moses ( imagined as Tommy ) , into a basket and setting the basket afloat in the river . The basket and baby are discovered by Pharaoh Angelica , who shows Moses around her palace and kingdom , and decides to make him her partner .

As Boris explains that the Pharaoh was unaware that Moses himself was actually a Hebrew , Chas enters the attic , looking for the children , and becomes locked in with the rest of them . He sits down and listens as Boris continues : years later , Boris says , Moses stood up for an abused Hebrew slave ( imagined as Chuckie ) , and was outed as a Hebrew . The episode then pictures Tommy as Moses fleeing to the desert , where he becomes a shepherd and forgets about Egypt and the Pharaoh , until the voice of God calls to him from a burning bush , telling him that he must free the Hebrews from slavery .

Moses confronts the Pharaoh and demands that she free the Hebrews . She refuses and calls her guards ( one of which was a kid named Justin , voiced by Dana Hill ) to drag Moses away ; he curses her kingdom with terrible plagues until she relents and allows Moses to leave with the enslaved Hebrews . As Boris is explaining how the Pharaoh deceives the Hebrews and prevents them from leaving , Angelica 's parents , Drew and Charlotte , arrive and become locked in with the others .

Boris resumes the story : the Pharaoh 's treachery causes Moses to curse her once more , this time with a plague on the first @-@ born children of Egypt . The Pharaoh , after realizing that she herself is a first @-@ born child , bargains with Moses : he can leave if he calls off this final plague . Moses hesitates at first , but complies and leads the Hebrews out of Egypt . The Pharaoh reneges on her promise ( after realizing that she set all of the Hebrews free ) and leads out her remaining army to pursue them .

Minka , Didi , and Stu arrive in the attic to find the group enthralled by the end of Boris 's story : Moses , cornered , calls down the power of God to part the Red Sea , which the Hebrews are approaching . They pass through the parted waters , which then crash back together behind them , engulfing the Pharaoh and her army . With the story over , the family gets up to finish the Seder only to see the wind blow the door shut , locking them all in . Boris decides to tell them another story , which Chas at first thinks is about how the Hebrews wandered the desert for forty years before finally reaching the Promised Land . Boris explains that it 's actually a story about how an aunt and uncle of his met at Passover Seder back in Russia .

= = Production = =

The episode 's inception in 1992 followed a call by Nickelodeon to the Rugrats production staff , pitching the concept of a special episode concerning Hanukkah . The crew agreed instead that a Passover special would offer both " historical interest " and a " funny idea " , so Paul Germain ? founder of the series along with Arlene Klasky and Gábor Csupó ? pitched the Passover idea instead .

Germain wrote the episode 's teleplay along with regular Rugrats writers Peter Gaffney , Rachel Lipman , and Jonathon Greenberg ; animators Jim Duffy , Steve Socki , and Jeff McGrath directed . While scripting the episode , now entitled " A Rugrats Passover " , the writers were forced to audit many elements of the portrayal of plagues , particularly the third one , so it could still be accessible to children and not too frightening . Though regular episodes of the series comprised two separate 15 @-@ minute segments , " A Rugrats Passover " had a special 22 @-@ minute format , occupying the show 's full network Rugrats slot . The show 's voice actors each spent from fifteen minutes to four hours in recording sessions for the episode .

The episode was released in several formats , including DVD and VHS . It appears on the video release A Rugrats Passover alongside features " Toys in the Attic " , and Rugrats Passover : Let My Babies Go . It is also featured on the Grandpa 's Favorite Stories video release , with the episode " The Return of Reptar " . Publisher Simon Spotlight in 1998 released a novelization of the episode , entitled Let My Babies Go ! A Passover Story , written by Sarah Wilson and featuring illustrations by Barry Goldberg .

= = Themes = =

" A Rugrats Passover " was unusual among contemporary animations in its attention to Jewish ritual and tradition . Its portrayal of a Seder dinner received press attention as a rare occurrence in children 's programming . The episode was also unusual among animated series for discussing the characters ' religious affiliations . It revealed Boris , Minka , and Didi 's adherence to Judaism , and compared it with the relative non @-@ participation of Stu and his side of the family . Chuckie and his father Chas , meanwhile , were portrayed as nonreligious yet inclusive and enthused to learn about the customs of the holiday .

As with other Rugrats episodes , " A Rugrats Passover " depicts " the innocence of a baby 's

perception of the world , " emphasizing the young characters ' intense , childlike reactions to their environment . Creator Klasky identified the episode 's depiction of the Pickles family as " very loving , [ and ] basically functional " as strikingly different from the prevailing trends in contemporary television programming . Another episode element common to the series ' broader themes is its treatment of Angelica 's mother Charlotte , who throughout the episode is glued to her cell phone and engrossed in her business life , despite her professed desire to provide Angelica with an educational environment .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings and accolades = = =

" A Rugrats Passover " was broadcast originally on April 13 , 1995 , on the Nickelodeon television network . Repeats of the episode began that Saturday at 7 : 30 p.m. The episode received a Nielsen Rating of 3 @. @ 1 , with a 4 @. @ 8 % share of American audiences , making it the sixth most @- @ watched American telecast of the week . According to Catherine Mullally , Vice President and Executive Producer of Nickelodeon Video and Audio Works in 1995 , the episode was the highest Nielsen @- @ rated telecast in the network 's history . The episode was supplanted as Nickelodeon 's most @- @ viewed in 1998 , by another Rugrats special , when the Thanksgiving episode " The Turkey Who Came to Dinner " attracted 3 @. @ 7 million viewers ( 9 @. @ 4 / 28 ) .

The episode was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award in the category " Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program ( for Programming Less Than One Hour ) , " but lost to The Simpsons episode " Lisa 's Wedding . " At the 23rd Annual Annie Awards it was nominated in the category " Best Individual Achievement for Writing in the Field of Animation , " but was beaten by the episode " The Tick vs. Arthur ? s Bank Account " from Fox Kids ' animated series The Tick . In 1995 , it was Rugrats ' submission for a CableACE award ; it received a nomination but did not win .

= = = Critical response = = =

" A Rugrats Passover " received overwhelmingly positive reviews and became one of the series ' all @- @ time most popular episodes . John J. O 'Connor of The New York Times wrote of the episode " If not a first , it certainly is a rarity . " Ted Cox of the Daily Herald called the episode " among the best holiday TV specials ever produced . " Other reviews applauded the episode for its treatment of Judaism . Authors Michael Atkinson and Laurel Shifrin , in their book Flickipedia : Perfect Films for Every Occasion , Holiday , Mood , Ordeal , and Whim praised the episode for celebrating " secular Jewishness in the wisest and most entertaining fashion [ ... ] Grandpa Boris regales the kids with an epic , albeit abridged , Exodus story . " Halley Blair of Forward Magazine called the episode " a comical primer for getting children ready for upcoming seders , " and Danny Goldberg , in How The Left Lost Teen Spirit , noted that the episode 's Jewish themes were " clearly expressed in the context of a mass appeal entertainment . " Among many positive reviews of the episode in Jewish community publications , Gila Wertheimer of the Chicago Jewish Star said that the episode " will entertain children of all ages ? and their parents . "

Joel Keller of AOL 's TV Squad , on the other hand , noted in 2006 that he " always hated " the episode , and resented that it was one of only two Passover @- @ themed television episodes he could find via a Google search .

= = = Anti @- @ Defamation League controversy = = =

" A Rugrats Passover , " along with other Rugrats episodes featuring Boris and Minka , attracted controversy when the Anti @- @ Defamation League ( ADL ) claimed that the two characters resembled anti @- @ Semitic drawings that had appeared in a 1930s Nazi newspaper . Nickelodeon 's then @- @ president Albie Hecht , himself Jewish , professed himself dumbfounded by the

criticism , calling it absurd . The controversy resurfaced in 1998 when the ADL criticized another appearance of Boris , this time reciting the Mourner 's Kaddish in a Rugrats comic strip published in newspapers during the Jewish New Year . Unlike Hecht , Nickelodeon 's new president Herb Scannell agreed with the criticism and apologized , promising never to run the character or the strip again .

= = = Legacy = = =

" A Rugrats Passover " has been Nickelodeon 's first programming about Passover ; the network went on to broadcast other episodes concerning Jewish traditions , including " Harold 's Bar Mitzvah " , a 1997 episode of Hey Arnold ! in which the character Harold Berman prepares for his Bar Mitzvah . Rugrats in turn produced a second Jewish holiday episode , this time to meet the network executives ' original Hanukkah special pitch . David N. Weiss , who had recently converted to Judaism , and J. David Stem collaborated to write the script , and Raymie Muzquiz directed . The episode , entitled " A Rugrats Chanukah , " was originally broadcast on December 4 , 1996 , on Nickelodeon and received a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 9 in the Kids 2 ? 11 demographic . Like " A Rugrats Passover , " it was critically acclaimed and became among the most popular episodes in the series .

In 2007 the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa , Oklahoma opened an exhibition of Biblical images in art and pop culture , including a poster for Let My Babies Go ! A Passover Story , the picture book based on " A Rugrats Passover " . Other items highlighted in the gallery included a promotional poster for The Simpsons episode " Simpsons Bible Stories " and a vintage Superman comic book entitled " The Red @-@ Headed Beatle of 1000 B.C. , " featuring the character Jimmy Olsen 's time @-@ traveling adventures in the Biblical age .