



## QUALITIES OF LIFE

Religion needn't pass Rover

William Hageman  
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The guests gathered around the Seder plate, in a circle on the floor, a book of instructions nearby. Most sat attentively. Some looked around and fidgeted. Some scratched and barked.

It was a Passover Seder for dogs.

[Soggy Paws](#), a dog wash and pet products store on West Leland Avenue in Chicago, is more accustomed to dog birthday parties and singles nights. This was a first, said co-owner Kevin Richardson.

"Paul [co-owner Paul Rathe] was trepidatious about doing this," Richardson said of the service. "Would it offend people? Will people get upset? I called one of my Orthodox friends in D.C. and she thought it was brilliant. As she said, being religious doesn't mean you have to be a stick-in-the-mud.

"Paul was worried till he went to the store to buy yarmulkes, and he saw Spider-Man yarmulkes. Then it was OK."

Yes, the dogs wore yarmulkes. Quit snickering. They also ate kosher dog food.

It was provided by Holly Sher, who owns [Evanger's Dog & Cat Food Co.](#) in Wheeling.

"A number of customers of hers wanted to keep kosher with their dogs," Richardson said. "Even a number of customers who were not religious during the year wanted to keep kosher for Passover."

The service itself was less than 20 minutes. On the Seder plate was an egg, parsley and matzo. Bottles of Concord grape juice sat nearby. The 11 dogs and their owners sat in a circle as Uri Heller, president of [Magen David Adom](#), the Israeli Red Cross, conducted the service. The owners sang and read from the booklets. You can expect only so much from dogs.

When it was time for the feast--a Seder is, after all, a communal meal--the three Evanger's dinners that are certified kosher (duck and sweet potatoes, hunk of beef and whole chicken thighs) were served. The dogs made quick work of the meal, and the brief Seder drew to a close.

"I think this is great," Heller said. "This is the first time I've known of any dog food that's kosher for Passover. It's really a mitzvah, a good deed."

Another dog Seder is scheduled for the evening of April 27. For more information, call [Soggy Paws](#) at 773-334-7663.