

PASSOVER: Exodus and Elation

Passover is an essential Jewish holiday that tells the story of the Jewish people's escape from enslavement in ancient Egypt. Steeped in tradition, storytelling, and celebration, it is one of the most commonly celebrated Jewish holidays. **This year, Passover will be celebrated from sundown on Wednesday, April 5 until sundown on Thursday, April 13.**

The Passover Principles

Passover commemorates the redemption of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. The first two nights feature a *Seder*, a festive ritual feast often celebrated with large groups of friends and family, where we read the Passover story from a book called a *Haggadah*. The story

recounts the bitterness of our enslavement, the infliction of the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, and our eventual Exodus from Egypt. In essence, we relive the experience of moving from enslavement to freedom.

A main component of celebrating Passover is abstaining from eating *Hametz*, or any food with a leavening agent in it. Leavening agents include yeast, baking soda, and baking powder. For the full 8 days of the holiday, we eat *Matzah*, unleavened bread, and other similar replacements. The easiest way to serve Passover-safe meals is by picking foods that are naturally gluten free or ones that are marked as "Kosher for Passover".

What is a Seder?

A Passover *Seder* is a great festive feast that takes place on the first two nights of the holiday. At a *Seder*, we closely follow a set of steps mapped out in the *Haggadah* that include ritual handwashing, drinking four glasses of wine (or juice), saying various blessings, singing traditional songs, and more. Most of the *Seder* focuses on a complete retelling of the Passover story. It traditionally includes a big meal, usually featuring matzah ball soup, meats, casseroles, and wine.

How to Have a Seder

Though there is a traditional way to have a *Seder*, there is no "right" way, since every family and community has its own customs and practices. There are many alternative types of *Seder* that can capture the spirit of the holiday. You can use an [abridged Haggadah](#) for a shorter *Seder*, or do something fun like a [Chocolate Seder](#). Symbolism is a huge part of the *Seder* (see Page 2), so how it is celebrated can be interpreted in many different ways.



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Symbolism and the Seder Plate

A *Seder* Plate can be found at most *Seders* and has designated sections for some of the most important ritual and symbolic foods present at a *Seder*. Here are some of the most common *Seder* foods and what they represent:



Matzah

Also spelled "*Matzo*", this is the unleavened bread that is regularly eaten throughout the holiday. It is eaten to remember that the Jewish people were so rushed to leave Egypt that they didn't have time to let their bread rise.

Pesach Offering/Zeroa

Also the Hebrew word for Passover, *Pesach*. A shank bone, usually from a lamb is called a *zeroa* in Hebrew. This is commemorative of when a lamb's blood was used to mark the home of the Jews, keeping them safe from the wrath of the 10 Plagues.

Maror

Maror is a bitter herb, usually horseradish, eaten to remind us of the bitterness of enslavement.

Charoset

A sweet paste often made of nuts, fruit, and wine, *Charoset* represents the mud and bricks used by Jewish slaves to build pyramids. It also symbolizes the sweetness of freedom, a foil to the bitter *Maror*, and the two are often eaten together.



Karpas

This is usually parsley or some other green vegetable that represents the renewal of springtime, when Passover takes place. When we bless the karpas during the *Seder*, we dip it in salt water, which represent the tears of our enslaved ancestors.

Egg

A hardboiled egg is also commonly found on a *Seder* plate, symbolizing birth in the Spring.

Important Terms for Passover

Hebrew...	It is pronounced...	It means...
Chag Sameach	Hahg sah-mey-ach	Happy Passover!
Pesach	Pess-akh	Passover
Seder	Say-der	A festive meal
Haggadah	Hog-ah-dah	The book read at Seder
Hametz	Ha-mates	Food with leavening
Mitzrayim	Meets-rye-eem	The Hebrew name for Egypt

Bubbe's Corner

You can always count on Bubbe (Yiddish for "grandmother") for her wisdom, stories and Passover traditions. Whether you are a Bubbe or have a Bubbe figure in your life, spend time learning about Passover celebrations. Be sure to ask your residents about what special things their families do to celebrate, and try to make them feel as at home as possible!

Some communities don't eat foods like legumes, rice, and corn on Passover because they too closely resemble *Hametz*. These foods are called *Kitniyot*.

In Israel, Passover lasts only 7 days – everywhere else, it lasts 8!



At a *Seder*, we follow a set of steps mapped out in the *Haggadah* that include ritual handwashing and drinking four glasses of wine (or juice).

Maxwell House started printing English-Hebrew Passover Haggadahs in 1932 as a marketing campaign for their kosher for Passover coffee. Since then, it has become the most widely distributed Haggadah in the U.S. with over 50 million copies in circulation.

Passover Music

Music plays a very important role in the celebration of Passover. With both traditional songs from the Haggadah and modern classics that tell the Passover story.

Echad Mi Yode'ah

This song, which translates to "Who knows One?" is a fun, repetitive song that enumerates various Jewish traditions, counting from one to 13. Usually sung at the end of the *Seder*, it's a familiar tune that many people know. [Watch a sensational performance of it here.](#)

Dayenu

Enough already! This song, which is found in the *Haggadah* lists the miracles that God has done for the Jewish people, ending each line by saying *Dayenu*- "it would have been enough". [Listen to this modern take on the traditional Passover song.](#)

Chad Gadya

This chain-reaction song is a fun one to do at the end of a *Seder*, usually with animal noises and all. [Comedian Jack Black seems to like it, too.](#)

Mah Nishtanah

This song, traditionally sung by the youngest person attending a *Seder*, asks the question "What makes this night different from all other nights?" The answer? Eating special foods and participating in certain traditions. [A staple of Passover, Mah Nishtanah can be listened to here.](#)

THE





Jewish Holidays Calendar 2023-2024*

HOLIDAY	DATE
Passover (8 days)	Wednesday, April 5* – Thursday, April 13, 2023
Shavuot (2 days)	Thursday, May 25* – Saturday, May 27, 2023
Rosh Hashanah (2 days)	Friday, Sept. 15* – Sunday Sept. 17, 2023
Yom Kippur (1 day)	Sunday, Sept. 24* – Monday, Sept. 25, 2023
Sukkot (7 days)	Friday, Sept. 29* – Friday, Oct. 6, 2023
Shemini Atzeret (1 day) & Simchat Torah (1 day)	Saturday, Oct. 6* – Sunday, Oct. 8, 2023
Hanukkah (8 days)	Thursday, Dec. 7* – Friday, Dec. 15, 2023
Purim	Saturday, March 23 – Sunday, March 34, 2024
Passover	Monday, April 22 – Tuesday, April 30, 2024

* **All holidays begin at sundown**

About JFS

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Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals, families, and the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values.

Our staff have expertise in:

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- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families
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JFS created the Dr. Rela Mintz Geffen Jewish Community Chaplaincy Fund to enable us to provide free spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term settings as well as those older adults who are living alone.

This publication and the visits and program offered by our Community Chaplain, Rabbi Ami Monson, are made possible through philanthropy.

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