



JFS Jewish Journal

Engaging Your Jewish Residents



Passover

Passover: Exodus & Elation

Passover: A Celebration of Redemption

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.

The Passover Principles

Passover commemorates the Jewish people's redemption from slavery in Egypt. The holiday begins with a *seder* on the first two nights, a festive meal that includes reading from the *Haggadah*, retelling the story of enslavement, the ten plagues, and the Exodus. This ritual helps to relive the journey from oppression to freedom.

A central tradition of Passover is avoiding *hametz*—any food made with a leavening agent like yeast or baking soda—for all eight days. Instead, it is substituted with *matzah*, unleavened bread, and other permissible substitutes. The easiest way to serve Passover-safe meals is by choosing naturally gluten-free foods or those labeled “Kosher for Passover.”

JFS is Here & This is How We Help

Jewish Family Services (JFS) enriches lives and strengthens the community by providing compassionate support and resources to individuals and families from all backgrounds. Guided by Jewish values, JFS specializes in supporting older adults' safety and independence, assisting families with resources and guidance, providing private transportation to appointments, offering expert counseling and care management, and more. You can learn more about JFS and our chaplaincy program on *page 6*.



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How to Celebrate Passover with Your Residents

Host a Seder



Passover is an important Jewish holiday often celebrated with a *seder*, a festive meal on the first two nights. Guided by the *Haggadah*, the *seder* includes ritual handwashing, drinking four cups of wine (or juice), blessings, songs, and retelling the Passover story. The meal typically features matzah ball soup, meats, casseroles, and wine.

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](#).

Lead a DIY Seder Plate Event



Lead a fun and interactive craft session where residents create their own cupcake paper *seder* plates using simple materials like a paper plate, cupcake liners, markers, and glue. This is a great opportunity to discuss the significance of each *seder* plate item (see [Page 3](#)) and engage residents in the holiday's traditions while encouraging creativity and discussions about Passover. [See the full instructions here.](#)

Sing Songs

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 G-d 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.](#)

Symbolism & 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. 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.

Egg:

A hardboiled egg is also commonly found on a *seder* plate, symbolizing birth and the continuity of life.

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.

Maror:

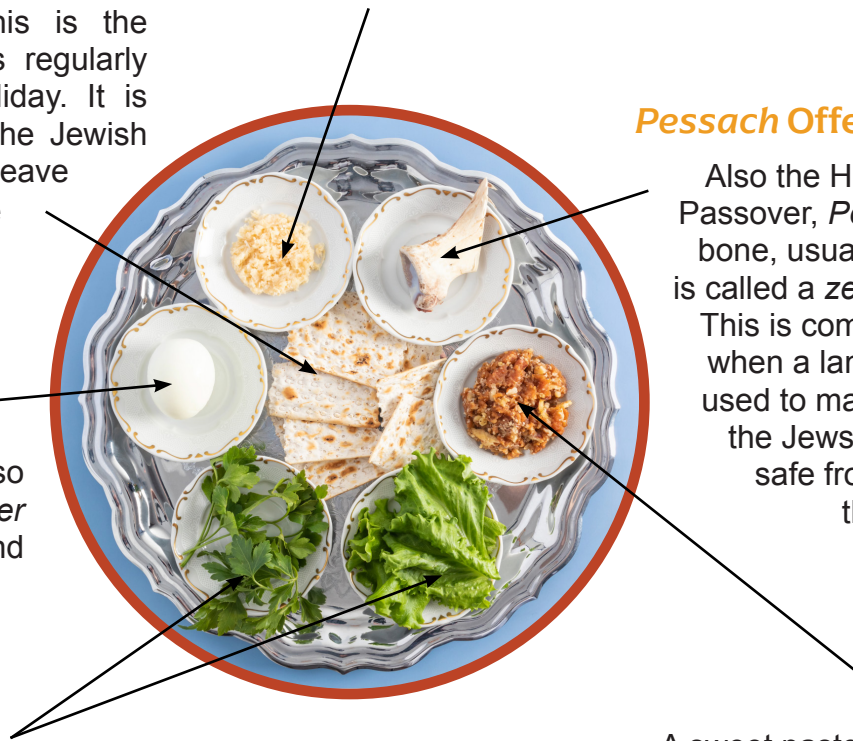
Maror is a bitter herb, usually horseradish, eaten to remind us of the bitterness of enslavement.

Pessach 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.

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.



Hebrew ...	It is pronounced ...	It means ...
<i>Chag Sameach</i>	Hahg sah-mey-ach	Happy Passover!
<i>Pesach</i>	Pess-akh	Passover
<i>Seder</i>	Say-der	A festive meal
<i>Haggadah</i>	Hog-ah-dah	The book read at <i>seder</i>
<i>Hametz</i>	Ha-mates	Food with leavening
<i>Mitzrayim</i>	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 Pasover 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*.

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

Traditionally, the youngest child has to read the Four Questions at the *seder*. In my family, my sister would read the questions in English and I would read them in Hebrew.

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About JFS

Jewish Family Services of Northeastern NY provides counseling, promotes independence, aging well, and access to basic needs, mitigates food insecurity and social isolation.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals and families from all backgrounds and strengthen the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values. This is amplified by volunteers and sustained by donors to ensure support for our community is within reach.

Our staff has expertise in:

- Helping older adults maintain their safety and independence
- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families
- Offering private transportation to medical appointments and synagogue services
- Counseling and care management (JFS is part of major insurance networks, including Medicare)

Support Our Chaplaincy Program

JFS provides spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term and elder care in the Capital Region.

Online: jfsneny.org/donations

Call: (518) 516-1102

Thank you!

For all Jewish Journals and this year's holiday dates, visit jfsneny.org/chaplaincy-support.



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