**Passover**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*This article is about the Jewish holiday. For other uses, see* [*Passover (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_(disambiguation))*.*

*"Pesakh" redirects here. For the military leader, see* [*Pesakh (general)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesakh_(general))*.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Passover** | |
|  | |
| **Official name** | [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): **פסח** (*Pesach*) |
| **Observed by** | [Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), [Samaritans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan), some [Christians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christians) including [Malayali Nasrani Christians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malayali_Nasrani_Christians), [Knanaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knanaya) and followers of [Messianic Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messianic_Judaism). |
| **Type** | One of the [Three Pilgrim Festivals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Pilgrim_Festivals) |
| **Significance** | Celebrates the [Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus), the freedom from [slavery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery) of the [Children of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_Israel) from [ancient Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_ancient_Egypt) that followed the [Ten Plagues](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Plagues).  Beginning of the 49 days of [Counting of the Omer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_of_the_Omer) |
| **Begins** | 15th day of [Nisan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisan) |
| **Ends** | 21st day of [Nisan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisan) in [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel), and among some liberal [Diaspora Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_diaspora); 22nd day of [Nisan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisan) outside of [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel) among more traditional Diaspora Jews. |
| **2012 date** | sunset of April 6 to nightfall of 13 April / 14 April (7th day) |
| **2013 date** | sunset of March 25 to nightfall of 1 April / 2 April (7th day) |
| **Celebrations** | In Jewish practice, one or two festive [Seder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder) meals – first two nights; in the times of the [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem), the [Passover sacrifice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_sacrifice). In Samaritan practice, men gather for a religious ceremony on [Mount Gerizim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Gerizim) that includes the ancient Passover Sacrifice. |
| **Related to** | [Shavuot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot) ("Festival of Weeks") which follows 49 days from the second night of Passover. |

**Passover** ([Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language), [Yiddish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish_language): פֶּסַח *Pesach,* [Tiberian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberian_Hebrew): [[pɛsaħ]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA_for_Hebrew) ( [listen](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/77/He-Pesach.ogg)), [Modern Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Hebrew): /ˈpesaχ/ *Pesah, Pesakh,* Yiddish: *Peysekh, Paysakh, Paysokh*) is a [Jewish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew) holiday and festival. It commemorates the story of [the Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus), in which the [ancient Israelites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Israelites) were freed from [slavery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery) in [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt). Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of [Nisan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisan) in the [Jewish calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_calendar), which is in spring in the [Northern Hemisphere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Hemisphere), and is celebrated for seven or eight days. It is one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays.



In the narrative of [the Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus), the Bible tells that [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God) helped the [Children of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_Israel) escape slavery in Egypt by inflicting [ten plagues](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_plagues) upon the Egyptians before the [Pharaoh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh) would release his Israelite slaves; the tenth and worst of the plagues was the death of the Egyptian first-born. The Israelites were instructed to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a spring lamb and, upon seeing this, the spirit of the Lord knew to *pass over* the first-borns in these homes, hence the name of the holiday. There is some debate over where the term is actually derived from. When the Pharaoh freed the Israelites, it is said that they left in such a hurry that they could not wait for bread dough to rise (leaven). In commemoration, for the duration of Passover no [leavened bread](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaven) is eaten, for which reason it is called "The Festival of the Unleavened Bread". [*Matzo*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzo) (flat unleavened bread) is a symbol of the holiday.

Together with [Shavuot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot) ("Pentecost") and [Sukkot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkot) ("Tabernacles"), Passover is one of the [three pilgrimage festivals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_pilgrimage_festivals) (*Shlosha Regalim*) during which the entire Jewish populace historically made a pilgrimage to the [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem). [Samaritans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan) still make this pilgrimage to [Mount Gerizim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Gerizim), but only men participate in public worship.

The Christian feast of [Maundy Thursday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maundy_Thursday) finds its roots in the Jewish feast of Passover, the night on which the [Last Supper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Supper) is generally thought to have occurred.

**Date and duration**

Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of [Nisan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisan), which typically falls in March or April of the [Gregorian calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar). Passover is a spring festival, so the 14th day of Nisan begins on the night of a full [moon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moon) after the northern [vernal equinox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernal_equinox). To ensure that Passover did not start before spring, the tradition in ancient Israel held that the first day of Nisan would not start until the barley was ripe, being the test for the onset of spring. If the barley was not ripe, or various other phenomena indicated that spring was not yet imminent, an [intercalary month](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercalation) ([Adar II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adar_II)) would be added. However, since at least the 4th century, the date has been fixed mathematically.

In [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Israel), Passover is the seven-day holiday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with the first and last days observed as legal holidays and as holy days involving abstention from work, special prayer services, and holiday meals; the intervening days are known as [Chol HaMoed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chol_HaMoed) ("Weekdays of the Festival"). Diaspora Jews historically observed the festival for eight days, and most still do. [Reform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism) and [Reconstructionist Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism) and Israeli Jews, wherever they are, usually observe the holiday over seven days. The reason for this extra day is due to enactment of the [Sages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wise_old_man). It is thought by many scholars that Jews outside of Israel could not be certain if their local calendars fully conformed to practice of the Temple at Jerusalem, so they added an extra day. But as this practice only attaches to certain (major) sacred days, others posit the extra day may have been added to accommodate people who had to travel long distances to participate in communal worship and ritual practices; or the practice may have evolved as a compromise between conflicting interpretations of Jewish Law regarding the calendar; or it may have evolved as a safety measure in areas where Jews were commonly in danger, so that their enemies would not be certain on which day to attack.

[Karaite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karaite) Jews and [Samaritans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan) use different versions of the Jewish calendar, which are often out of sync with the modern Jewish calendar by one or two days. In 2009, for example, Nisan 15 on the Jewish calendar used by Rabbinical Judaism corresponds to April 9. On the calendars used by Karaites and Samaritans, *Abib* or *Aviv* 15 (as opposed to 'Nisan') corresponds to April 11 in 2009. The Karaite and Samaritan Passovers are each one day long, followed by the six day Festival of Unleavened Bread – for a total of seven days.

**Biblical origin**



Illustration of [The Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus) from Egypt, 1907

Called the feast of [unleavened bread](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matza) (Hebrew *hag hamatzot* ) in the [Hebrew Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), the commandment to keep Passover is recorded in the [Book of Leviticus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Leviticus):

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month between the two evenings is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord; seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work. And ye shall bring an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days; in the seventh day is a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work. ([Leviticus 23:5](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Leviticus&verse=23:5&src=HE))

The biblical regulations for the observance of the festival require that all leavening be disposed of before the beginning of the 15th of Nisan([Exodus 13:7](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=13:7&src=RSV)) An unblemished lamb or goat is to be set apart on Nisan 10,([Exodus 12:3](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:3&src=RSV)) and slaughtered on Nisan 14 "between the two evenings", a phrase which is, however, not defined. It is then to be eaten "that night", Nisan 15, roasted, without the removal of its internal organs with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Nothing of the sacrifice on which the sun rises may be eaten, but must be burned. The sacrifices may only be performed in a specific place prescribed by God (for Judaism, Jerusalem, and for Samaritans, Mount Gerizim).

The biblical regulations pertaining to the original Passover also include how the meal is to be eaten: "with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover" (Exodus 12:11).

Some of these details can be corroborated, and to some extent amplified, in extrabiblical sources. The removal (or "sealing up") of the leaven is referred to in the [Elephantine papyri](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine_papyri), an Aramaic papyrus from 5th century BCE Elephantine in Egypt. The slaughter of the lambs on the 14th is mentioned in [*The Book of Jubilees*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jubilees), a Jewish work of the Ptolemaic period, and by the Herodian-era writers [Josephus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus) and [Philo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo). These sources also indicate that "between the two evenings" was taken to mean the afternoon. *Jubilees* states the sacrifice was eaten that night, and together with Josephus states that nothing of the sacrifice was allowed to remain until morning. Philo states that the banquet included hymns and prayers.

The Biblical commandments concerning the Passover (and the Feast of Unleavened Bread) stress the importance of remembering: And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." ([Deuteronomy 16:12](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Deuteronomy&verse=16:12&src=HE)) [Exodus 12:14](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:14&src=HE) commands, in reference to God's sparing of the firstborn from the [Tenth Plague](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Plagues): And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the lord; throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever. [Exodus 13:3](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=13:3&src=HE) repeats the command to remember: Remember this day, in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength the hand of the LORD brought you out from this place.

**Etymology**

|  |
| --- |
| Part of [a series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_Judaism) on |
| [**Jews**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews) **and** [**Judaism**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) |
|  |
| * [**Etymology**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew_(word)) * [**Who is a Jew?**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Who_is_a_Jew%3F) |
| [Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism)  [God in Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Judaism)  [Names](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Judaism)  [Principles of faith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_principles_of_faith)  [Mitzvot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitzvah)  [613](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments)  [Halakha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha)  [Shabbat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat)  [Holidays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_holiday)  [Prayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_prayer)  [Tzedakah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tzedakah)  [Brit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brit_milah)  [Bar and Bat Mitzvah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_and_Bat_Mitzvah)  [Marriage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_views_on_marriage)  [Bereavement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bereavement_in_Judaism)  [Philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_philosophy)  [Ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_ethics)  [Kabbalah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah)  [Customs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minhag)  [Synagogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue)  [Rabbi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi) |
| [Texts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Jewish_texts)  [Tanakh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanakh)  [Torah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah)  [Nevi'im](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevi%27im)  [Ketuvim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketuvim)  [Targum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum)  [Talmud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud)  [Mishnah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah)  [Gemara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemara)  [Rabbinic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic_literature)  [Midrash](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrash)  [Tosefta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tosefta)  [Mishneh Torah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishneh_Torah)  [Tur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arba%27ah_Turim)  [Shulchan Aruch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shulchan_Aruch)  [Zohar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zohar) |
| [Communities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_ethnic_divisions)  [Ashkenazi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkenazi_Jews)  [Sephardi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews)  [Mizrahi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizrahi_Jews)  [Bukharan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bukharan_Jews)  [Kurdish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_Jews)  [Mountain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_Jews)  [Romaniotes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romaniotes)  Related groups:  [Lemba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lemba_people)  [Khazars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khazars)  [Karaim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_Karaites)  [Krymchaks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krymchaks)  [Samaritans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan)  [Crypto-Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crypto-Judaism)  [Mosaic Arabs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_tribes_of_Arabia) |
| [Population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population)  [**Land of Israel**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_the_Land_of_Israel)  [Israeli Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_Jews)  [Palestinian Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_Jews)  [**Europe**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews_and_Judaism_in_Europe)  [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Russia)  [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Poland)  [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Germany)  [Netherlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_the_Netherlands)  [Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Austria)  [Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Hungary)  [Romania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Romania)  [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_the_United_Kingdom)  [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_France)  [Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Spain)  [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Italy)  [Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Greece)  [Bulgaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Bulgaria)  [**Asia**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Asian_Jews)  [Iraq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Iraq)  [Yemen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemenite_Jews)  [Syria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Syria)  [Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Lebanon)  [Iran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Iran)  [Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Turkey)  [Georgia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Georgia_(country))  [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_India)  [Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Pakistan)  [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_China)  [**Africa**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Jews)  [Morocco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Morocco)  [Algeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Algeria)  [Tunisia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Tunisia)  [Libya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Libya)  [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Egypt)  [Ethiopia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beta_Israel)  [South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_South_Africa)  [**North America**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_America)  [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_the_United_States)  [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Canada)  [**Latin America**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Latin_America)  [Argentina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_of_Argentina)  [Brazil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Brazil)  [Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Mexico)  [**Oceania**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Oceania)  [Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Australia)  [New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_New_Zealand)  [Judaism by country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism_by_country)  [Lists of Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_Jews)  [Rabbis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi)  [Historical population comparisons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jewish_population_comparisons) |
| [Denominations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_religious_movements)  [Alternative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_Judaism)  [Conservative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism)  [Humanistic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanistic_Judaism)  [Karaite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karaite_Judaism)  [Liberal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Judaism)  [Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism)  [Reconstructionist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism)  [Reform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_movement_in_Judaism)  [Renewal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Renewal)  [Traditional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_for_Traditional_Judaism) |
| [Culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_culture)  [Minyan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minyan)  [Wedding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_wedding)  [Niddah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niddah)  [Pidyon haben](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pidyon_haben)  [Music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_music)  [Cuisine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_cuisine)  [Hiloni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiloni)  [Shidduch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shidduch)  [Zeved habat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeved_habat)  [Conversion to Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conversion_to_Judaism) |
| [Languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_languages)  [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language)  [Biblical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hebrew)  [Yiddish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish_language)  [Juhuri](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juhuri_language)  [Judæo-Iranian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jud%C3%A6o-Iranian_languages)  [Ladino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaeo-Spanish)  [Judeo-Aramaic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Aramaic_language)  [Judeo-Arabic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Arabic_languages) |
| [History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_history)  [Timeline](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Jewish_history)  [Leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_leadership)  [Ancient](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_ancient_Israel_and_Judah)  [Kingdom of Judah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Judah)  [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem)  [Babylonian captivity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_captivity)  [Yehud Medinata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yehud_Medinata)  [Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem)  [in Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_in_Judaism)  [Timeline](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Jerusalem)  [Hasmonean dynasty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty)  [Sanhedrin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanhedrin)  [Schisms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_schisms)  [Pharisees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharisees)  [Jewish–Roman wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish%E2%80%93Roman_wars)  [Christianity and Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_and_Judaism)  [Islamic–Jewish relations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic%E2%80%93Jewish_relations)  [Diaspora](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_diaspora)  [Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews_in_the_Middle_Ages)  [Sabbateans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabbateans)  [Hasidism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism)  [Haskalah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haskalah)  [Emancipation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_emancipation)  [The Holocaust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust)  [Aliyah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aliyah)  [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel)  [history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel)  [Arab–Israeli conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab%E2%80%93Israeli_conflict)  [Land of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Israel)  [Baal teshuva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal_teshuva_movement)  [Persecution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Jews)  [Antisemitism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism)  [history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_antisemitism) |
| [Politics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_political_movements)  [Zionism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionism)  [Labor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_Zionism)  [Revisionist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revisionist_Zionism)  [Religious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Zionism)  [Green](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Zionism)  [General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Zionists)  [Bundism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bundism)  [World Agudath Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Agudath_Israel)  [Feminism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_feminism)  [Politics of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Israel)  [Left](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_left)  [Right](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_right) |
|  |

The verb "*pasàch*" ([Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): פָּסַח‎) is first mentioned in the [Torah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah) account of [the Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus) from Egypt ([Exodus 12:23](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:23&src=HE)), and there is some debate about its exact meaning: the commonly held assumption that it means "He passed over", in reference to God "passing over" the houses of the Hebrews during the final of the Ten [Plagues of Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagues_of_Egypt), stems from the translation provided in the [Septuagint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint) (*παρελευσεται* in [Exodus 12:23](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:23&src=HE), and *εσκεπασεν* in [Exodus 12:27](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:27&src=HE)). Judging from other instances of the verb, and instances of [parallelism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallelism_(rhetoric)), a more faithful translation may be "he hovered over, guarding." Indeed, this is the image invoked by the verb in [Isaiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah) 31:5: "As birds hovering, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem; He will deliver it as He protecteth it, He will rescue it as He *passeth over*" (כְּצִפֳּרִים עָפוֹת—כֵּן יָגֵן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, עַל-יְרוּשָׁלִָם; גָּנוֹן וְהִצִּיל, פָּסֹחַ וְהִמְלִיט.) ([Isaiah 31:5](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Isaiah&verse=31:5&src=HE)) Both meanings become apparent in Exodus 12:23 when parsed as: the Lord will pass (hover, guard) over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer (destroying angel is commanded to pass by the children of Israel) to come in unto your houses to smite. Targum Onkelos translates pesach as "he had pity", The English term "Passover" is first known recorded in the [English language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) in [William Tyndale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Tyndale)'s translation of the Bible, later appearing in the [King James Version](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version_of_the_Bible) as well.

The term *Pesach* ([Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): פֶּסַח‎) may also refer to the [lamb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_sheep) or [goat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_goat) which was designated as the Passover sacrifice (called the [*Korban*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korban) *Pesach* in [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language)). Four days before the Exodus, the Hebrews were commanded to set aside a lamb.([Exodus 12:3](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:3&src=HE)) and inspect it daily for blemishes. During the day on the 14th of Nisan, they were to slaughter the animal and use its blood to mark their lintels and door posts. Up until midnight on the 15th of Nisan, they were to consume the lamb. Each family (or group of families) gathered together to eat a meal that included the meat of the *Korban Pesach* while the Tenth Plague ravaged Egypt.

In subsequent years, during the existence of the [Tabernacle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle_(Judaism)) and later the [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem), the Passover offering (Hebrew *korban Pesach*) was eaten during the [Passover Seder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder) on the 15th of Nisan. However, following the destruction of the Temple, no sacrifices may be offered or eaten. The *Seder Korban Pesach*, a set of scriptural and Rabbinic passages dealing with the Passover sacrifice, is customarily recited during or after the [*Mincha*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_services) (afternoon prayer) service on the 14th on Nisan. The story of the *Korban Pesach* is also retold at the Passover Seder, meaning order, and the symbolic food which represents it on the [Seder Plate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder_Plate) is usually a roasted lamb [shankbone](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/shank) or chicken wing.

**Passover offering, *korban Pesach***

Main article: [Korban Pesach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korban_Pesach)

When the [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem) was standing, the focus of the Passover festival was the Passover sacrifice (Hebrew *korban Pesach*) also known as the "Paschal Lamb"). Every family large enough to completely consume a young lamb or wild goat was required to offer one for sacrifice at the Jewish Temple on the afternoon of the 14th day of Nisan,([Num 9:11](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Num&verse=9:11&src=HE)) and eat it that night, which was the 15th of Nisan ([Exodus 12:6](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:6&src=NIV)). If the family was too small to finish eating the entire offering in one sitting, an offering was made for a group of families. The sacrifice could not be offered with anything leavened,([Exodus 23:18](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=23:18&src=HE)) and had to be roasted, without its head, feet, or inner organs being removed ([Exodus 12:9](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:9&src=HE)) and eaten together with unleavened bread ([*matzo*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzo)) and bitter herbs ([*maror*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maror)). One had to be careful not to break any bones from the offering, ([Exodus 12:46](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:46&src=HE)) and none of the meat could be left over by morning ([Exodus 12:10](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:10&src=HE)[Exodus 23:18](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=23:18&src=HE)).

Because of the Passover sacrifice's status as a sacred offering, the only people allowed to eat it were those who had the obligation to bring the offering. Among those who could not offer or eat the Passover lamb were: An [apostate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostate) ([Exodus 12:43](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:43&src=HE)), a [servant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indentured_servant) ([Exodus 12:45](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:45&src=HE)), an [uncircumcised man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brit_milah) ([Exodus 12:48](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:48&src=HE)), a person in a state of [ritual impurity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tohorot), except when a majority of Jews are in such a state ([*Pesahim*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesahim) 66b), and a non-Jew. The offering had to be made before a [quorum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quorum) of 30 ([*Pesahim*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesahim) 64b). In the Temple, the [Levites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levites) sang [Hallel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallel) while the [priests](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kohen) performed the sacrificial service. Men and women were equally obligated regarding the offering ([*Pesahim*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesahim) 91b).

Women were obligated, as men, to perform the Korban Pesach and to participate in a Seder.

**Today**

Today, in the absence of the Temple, the [mitzvah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitzvah) of the *Korban Pesach* is memorialized in the *Seder Korban Pesach*, recited in the afternoon of Nisan 14, and in the form of symbolic food placed on the [Passover Seder Plate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder_Plate), which is usually a roasted [shankbone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humerus). The eating of the [afikoman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afikoman) substitutes for the eating of the *Korban Pesach* at the end of the Seder meal ([Mishnah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah) Pesachim 119a). Many [Sephardi Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews) have the custom of eating lamb or goat meat during the Seder in memory of the *Korban Pesach*.

**Removing all chametz**



Burning chametz on the morning of the seder

[Chametz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chametz#What_is_chametz.3F) (חמץ, "[leavening](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leavening)") is something that is both made from one of five types of grains, and has been combined with water and left to stand raw for longer than eighteen minutes. The consumption, keeping, and owning of *chametz* is forbidden during Passover. Yeast and fermentation are not themselves forbidden as seen for example by wine, which is required, rather than merely permitted. According to Halakha, the ownership of such *chametz* is also proscribed.

*Chametz* does not include [baking soda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baking_soda), [baking powder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baking_powder) or like products. Although these are defined in English as leavening agents, they leaven by chemical reaction, not by biological fermentation. Thus, bagels, waffles and pancakes made with baking soda and matzo meal are considered permissible, while bagels made with sourdough and pancakes and waffles made with yeast are prohibited.

The Torah commandments regarding *chametz* are:

* To remove all *chametz* from one's home, including things made with chametz, before the first day of Passover. ([Exodus 12:15](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:15&src=HE)). It may be simply used up, thrown out (historically, destroyed by burning), or given or sold to non-Jews (or non-Samaritans, as the case may be).
* To refrain from eating *chametz* or mixtures containing *chametz* during Passover. ([Exodus 13:3](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=13:3&src=HE), [Exodus 12:20](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:20&src=HE), [Deuteronomy 16:3](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Deuteronomy&verse=16:3&src=HE)).
* Not to possess *chametz* in one's domain (i.e. home, office, car, etc.) during Passover ([Exodus 12:19](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:19&src=HE), [Deuteronomy 16:4](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Deuteronomy&verse=16:4&src=HE)).

Observant Jews spend the weeks before Passover in a flurry of thorough housecleaning, to remove every morsel of *chametz* from every part of the home. [Jewish law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha) requires the elimination of [olive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive)-sized or larger quantities of leavening from one's possession, but most housekeeping goes beyond this. Even the cracks of kitchen counters are thoroughly scrubbed, for example, to remove any traces of flour and yeast, however small. Any item or implement that has handled *chametz* is generally put away and not used during Passover.

Some [hotels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel), [resorts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resort), and even [cruise ships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruise_ship) across [America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe) and [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel) also undergo a thorough housecleaning to make their premises "kosher for Pesach" to cater to observant Jews.

**Search for, and burning of leaven**

Traditionally, Jews do a formal search for remaining leaven (Hebrew *chametz*, as in *bedikat chametz*) after nightfall on the evening before Passover. A blessing is read (על ביעור חמץ – *al biyur chametz*, "on the removal of leaven"), and one or more members of the household proceed from room to room to check that no crumbs remain in any corner. In very traditional families, the search may be conducted by the head of the household; in more modern-stylefamilies, the children may be the ones who do the search, under the supervision of their parents.

It is customary to turn off the lights and conduct the search by [candlelight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candle), using a feather and a wooden spoon: candlelight effectively illuminates corners without casting shadows; the feather can dust crumbs out of their hiding places; and the wooden spoon which collects the crumbs can be burned the next day with the *chametz*. However, most contemporary Jewish-Orthodox authorities permit using a flashlight, while some strongly encourage it due to the danger coupled with using a candle. Because the house is assumed to have been thoroughly cleaned by the night before Passover, there is some concern that making a blessing over the search for *chametz* will be for naught (*bracha l'vatala*) if nothing is found. Thus, 10 morsels of bread smaller than the size of an olive are traditionally hidden throughout the house in order to ensure that some *chametz* will be found.

On the morning of the 14th of [Nisan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisan), any leavened products that remain in the householder's possession, along with the 10 morsels of bread from the previous night's search, are burned (*s'rayfat chametz*). The head of the household repeats the declaration of *biyur chametz*, declaring any *chametz* that may not have been found to be null and void "as the dust of the earth". Should more *chametz* actually be found in the house during the Passover holiday, it must be burnt as soon as possible.

Unlike *chametz*, which can be eaten any day of the year except during Passover, kosher for Passover foods can be eaten year-round. They need not be burnt or otherwise discarded after the holiday ends. The sole exception is the historic [sacrificial lamb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_sacrifice), which is never part of the modern Jewish holiday but is still a principal feature of Falashah, Karaite and Samaritan observance. The meat of this lamb, which is slaughtered and cooked on the evening of Passover, must be completely consumed before the morning.([Exodus 12:15](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Exodus&verse=12:15&src=HE))

**Sale of chametz**

*Chametz* may be sold rather than discarded, especially in the case of relatively valuable forms such as [liquor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liquor) [distilled](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distillation) from wheat, with the products being repurchased afterward. In some cases, they may never leave the house, instead being formally sold while remaining in the original owner's possession in a locked cabinet until they can be repurchased after the holiday. Modern observance may also include sealing cabinets and drawers which contain "Chametz" shut by using adhesive tape, which serves a similar purpose to a lock but also shows evidence of tampering. Although the practice of selling "Chametz" dates back many years, some contemporary rabbinical authorities have come to regard it with disdain – since the supposed "new owner" never takes actual possession of the goods.

The sale of *chametz* may also be conducted communally via a [rabbi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi), who becomes the "agent" for all the community's Jews through a halakhic procedure called a *kinyan* (acquisition). Each householder must put aside all the *chametz* he is selling into a box or cupboard, and the rabbi enters into a contract to sell all the *chametz* to a non-Jew (who is not obligated to observe the commandments) in exchange for a small [down payment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Down_payment) (*e.g.* $1.00), with the remainder due after Passover. This sale is considered completely binding according to Halakha, and at any time during the holiday, the buyer may come to take or partake of his property. The rabbi then re-purchases the goods for less than they were sold at the end of the holiday.

**Separate dishes**

Due to the Torah injunction not to eat *chametz* during Passover, observant families typically own complete sets of serving dishes, glassware and silverware (and in some cases, even separate dishwashers and sinks) which have never come into contact with *chametz*, for use only during Passover. Under certain circumstances, some *chametz* utensils can be immersed in boiling water (*hagalat keilim*) to purge them of any traces of *chametz* that may have accumulated during the year. Many [Sephardic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews) families thoroughly wash their year-round glassware and then use it for Passover, as the Sephardic position is that [glass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass) does not absorb enough traces of food to present a problem. Similarly, ovens may be used for Passover either by setting the self-cleaning function to the highest degree for a certain period of time, or by applying a [blow torch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blow_torch) to the interior until the oven glows red hot (a process called *libun gamur*).

**Matzah**



Matzah

A symbol of the Passover holiday is [matzo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzo), an unleavened flatbread made solely from flour and water which is continually worked from mixing through baking, so that it is not allowed to rise. Matzo may be made by machine or by hand; the latter type of matzo, called *shmura matzo* ("watched" or "guarded" matzo), is the bread of preference for the Passover Seder in Orthodox Jewish communities. The Torah contains a Divine commandment to eat matzo, specifically, on the first night of Passover and to eat only unleavened bread (in practice, matzo) during the entire week of Passover. Consequently the eating of matzo figures prominently in the [Passover Seder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder). There are several explanations for this.

The Torah says that it is because the Hebrews left Egypt with such haste that there was no time to allow baked bread to rise; thus flat, unleavened bread, matzo, is a reminder of the rapid departure of the Exodus. Other scholars teach that in the time of the Exodus, matzo was commonly baked for the purpose of traveling because it preserved well and was light to carry (making it similar to [hardtack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hardtack)), suggesting that matzo was baked intentionally for the long journey ahead.

Matzo has also been called *Lechem Oni* (Hebrew: "bread of poverty"). There is an attendant explanation that matzo serves as a symbol to remind Jews what it is like to be a poor slave and to promote humility, appreciate freedom, and avoid the inflated ego symbolized by more luxurious leavened bread.



Handmade *shmura matzo*

In the weeks before Passover, matzos are prepared for holiday consumption. In [Orthodox Jewish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism) communities, men traditionally gather in groups ("[*chaburas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chavruta)") to bake a special version of handmade matzo called "*shmura matzo*", or "guarded matzo", for use at the Seder. These are made from wheat that is guarded from contamination by chametz from the time of summer [harvest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvest) to its baking into matzos five to ten months later. *Shmura matzo* dough is rolled by hand, resulting in a large and round matzo. *Chaburas* also work together in machine-made matzo factories, which produce the typically square-shaped matzo sold in stores.

The baking of *shmura matzo* is labor-intensive, as only 18–22 minutes is permitted between the mixing of flour and water to the conclusion of baking and removal from the oven; however, most are completed within 5 minutes of being kneaded. Consequently, only a small number of matzos can be baked at one time, and the *chabura* members are enjoined to work the dough constantly so that it is not allowed to ferment and rise. A special cutting tool is run over the dough just before baking to prick any bubbles which might make the matza puff up; this creates the familiar dotted holes in the matzo.

After the matzos come out of the oven, the entire work area is scrubbed down and swept to make sure that no pieces of old, potentially leavened dough remain, as any stray pieces are now *chametz*, and can contaminate the next batch of matzo.

**Fast of the Firstborn**

On the morning of the Passover seder, firstborn sons are commanded to observe the [Fast of the Firstborn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast_of_the_Firstborn) which commemorates the salvation of the Hebrew firstborns. According to Exodus (12:29), God struck down all Egyptian firstborns while the Israelites were not affected. However, it is customary for synagogues to conduct a [*siyum*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siyum) (ceremony marking the completion of a section of [Torah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah) learning) right after morning prayers, and the celebratory meal that follows cancels the firstborn's obligation to fast.

**Passover seder**



Table set for the Passover Seder

Main article: [Passover Seder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder)

It is traditional for Jewish families to gather on the first night of Passover (first two nights in communities outside the land of Israel) for a special dinner called a [seder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_seder) (סדר—derived from the [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language) word for "order", referring to the very specific order of the ritual). The table is set with the finest china and silverware to reflect the importance of the meal. During this meal, the story of the Exodus from Egypt is retold using a special text called the [Haggadah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haggadah). Four cups of wine are consumed at various stages in the narrative. The Haggadah divides the night's procedure into 15 parts:

1. *Kadeish* קדש – recital of [Kiddush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiddush) blessing and drinking of the first cup of wine
2. *Urchatz* ורחץ – the washing of the hands – without blessing
3. *Karpas* כרפס – dipping of the [*karpas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpas) in salt water
4. *Yachatz* יחץ – breaking the middle matzo; the larger piece becomes the [*afikoman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afikoman) which is eaten later during the ritual of *Tzafun*
5. *Maggid* מגיד – retelling the Passover story, including the recital of "[the four questions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_four_questions)" and drinking of the second cup of wine
6. *Rachtzah* רחצה – second washing of the hands – with blessing
7. *Motzi* מוציא – traditional blessing before eating [bread](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bread) products
8. *Matzo* מצה – blessing before eating [matzo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzo)
9. *Maror* מרור – eating of the [maror](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maror)
10. *Koreich* כורך – eating of a sandwich made of matzo and maror
11. *Shulchan oreich* שולחן עורך – lit. "set table"—the serving of the holiday meal
12. *Tzafun* צפון – eating of the [*afikoman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afikoman)
13. *Bareich* ברך – blessing after the meal and drinking of the third cup of wine
14. [*Hallel*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallel) הלל – recital of the Hallel, traditionally recited on festivals; drinking of the fourth cup of wine
15. *Nirtzah* נירצה – [conclusion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conclusion)

These 15 parts parallel the 15 steps in the [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem) on which the [Levites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levite) stood during Temple services, and which were memorialized in the 15 [Psalms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Psalms) (#120-134) known as *Shir HaMa'alot* ([Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): שיר המעלות‎, "Songs of Ascent").

The seder is replete with questions, answers, and unusual practices (e.g. the recital of [Kiddush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiddush) which is not immediately followed by the blessing over bread, which is the traditional procedure for all other holiday meals) to arouse the interest and curiosity of the children at the table. The children are also rewarded with nuts and candies when they ask questions and participate in the discussion of the Exodus and its aftermath. Likewise, they are encouraged to search for the [*afikoman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afikoman), the piece of matzo which is the last thing eaten at the seder. Audience participation and interaction is the rule, and many families' seders last long into the night with animated discussions and much singing. The seder concludes with additional songs of praise and faith printed in the Haggadah, including [*Chad Gadya*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chad_Gadya) ("One Little Kid" or "One Little Goat").

**Maror**



Types of maror: grated [horseradish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horseradish), [romaine lettuce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romaine_lettuce), whole horseradish root

[Maror](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maror) symbolizes the bitterness of slavery in [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt). The following verse from the [Torah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah) underscores that symbolism: "And they embittered (*ve-yimareru* וימררו) their lives with hard labor, with mortar and with bricks and with all manner of labor in the field; any labor that they made them do was with hard labor" ([Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Exodus) 1:14).



Silver seder plate

**Four cups of wine**

There is a Rabbinic requirement that four cups of wine are to be drunk during the seder meal. This applies to both men and women. The Mishnah says (Pes. 10:1) that even the poorest man in Israel has an obligation to drink. Each cup is connected to a different part of the seder: the first cup is for Kiddush, the second cup is connected with the recounting of [the Exodus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus), the drinking of the third cup concludes [Birkat Hamazon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birkat_Hamazon) and the fourth cup is associated with Hallel.

**Participation of children**

**The four questions**

See also: [The four questions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_four_questions)

Children have a very important role in the Passover seder. Traditionally the youngest child is prompted to ask questions about the Passover seder, beginning with the words, *Mah Nishtana HaLeila HaZeh* (Why is this night different from all other nights?). The questions encourage the gathering to discuss the significance of the symbols in the meal. The questions asked by the child are:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights, we eat either unleavened or leavened bread, but tonight we eat only unleavened bread?

On all other nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables, but tonight, we eat only bitter herbs?

On all other nights, we do not dip [our food] even once, but tonight we dip twice?

On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but tonight we only recline?

Often the leader of the seder and the other adults at the meal will use prompted responses from the Haggadah, which states, "The more one talks about [the Exodus from Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus), the more praiseworthy he is." Many readings, prayers, and stories are used to recount the story of the Exodus. Many households add their own commentary and interpretation and often the story of the Jews is related to the theme of liberation and its implications worldwide.

**Afikoman**



14th century Haggadah

The *afikoman* — an integral part of the Seder itself — is used to engage the interest and excitement of the children at the table. During the fourth part of the Seder, called *Yachatz*, the leader breaks the middle piece of matzo into two. He sets aside the larger portion as the *afikoman*. Many families use the *afikoman* as a device for keeping the children awake and alert throughout the Seder proceedings by hiding the *afikoman* and offering a prize for its return. Alternatively, the children are allowed to "steal" the *afikoman* and demand a reward for its return. In either case, the *afikoman* must be consumed during the twelfth part of the Seder, *Tzafun*.

**Concluding songs**

After the Hallel, the fourth glass of wine is drunk, and participants recite a prayer that ends in "Next year in Jerusalem!". This is followed by several lyric prayers that expound upon God's mercy and kindness, and give thanks for the survival of the Jewish people through a history of exile and hardship. "Echad Mi Yodea" ("Who Knows One?") is a playful song, testing the general knowledge of the children (and the adults). Some of these songs, such as "Chad Gadiyah" are allegorical.

**Hol Hamoed**

In [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Israel), Passover lasts for seven days with the first and last days being major [Jewish holidays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_holidays). In [Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism) and [Conservative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism) communities, no work is performed on those days, with most of the rules relating to the observances of [Shabbat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat) being applied. A seder is held on the first day.

Outside Israel, in [Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism) and [Conservative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism) communities, the holiday lasts for eight days with the first two days and last two days being major holidays. A seder is conducted twice, on both the first and second days. In the intermediate days necessary work can be performed. [Reform Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism) observes Passover over seven days, with the first and last days being a major holidays. The Seder is held on the first day.

Like the holiday of [Sukkot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkot), the intermediary days of Passover are known as [Chol HaMoed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chol_HaMoed) (festival weekdays) and are imbued with a semi-festive status. It is a time for family outings and picnic lunches of matzo, hardboiled eggs, fruits and vegetables, and Passover treats such as [macaroons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macaroon) and homemade candies.

Passover cake recipes call for [potato starch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potato_starch) or Passover cake flour made from finely granulated matzo instead of regular flour, and a large amount of eggs to achieve fluffiness. Cookie recipes use [matzo farfel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzo_farfel) (broken bits of matzo) or ground nuts as the base. For families with [Eastern European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe) backgrounds, [borsht](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borsht), a soup made with [beets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beet), is a Passover tradition.



A Passover brownie cake baked in a [Wonder Pot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wonder_Pot).

While kosher for Passover packaged goods are available in stores, some families opt to cook everything from scratch during Passover week. In [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel), families that do not [kasher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashrut) their ovens can bake cakes, casseroles, and even meat on the [stovetop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitchen_stove) in a [Wonder Pot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wonder_Pot), an Israeli invention consisting of three parts: an [aluminum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aluminium) pot shaped like a [Bundt pan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bundt_cake), a hooded cover perforated with venting holes, and a thick, round, metal disc with a center hole which is placed between the Wonder Pot and the flame to disperse heat.

Many Orthodox Jews during Hol Hamoed go on trips such as baseball games and Six Flags Great Adventure.

**Counting of the Omer**

Main article: [Counting of the Omer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_of_the_Omer)

Beginning on the second night of Passover, the 16th day of Nisan, Jews begin the practice of the [Counting of the Omer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_of_the_Omer), a nightly reminder of the approach of the holiday of [Shavuot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot) 50 days hence. Each night after the evening prayer service, men and women recite a special blessing and then enumerate the day of the Omer. On the first night, for example, they say, "Today is the first day in (or, to) the Omer"; on the second night, "Today is the second day in the Omer." The counting also involves weeks; thus, the seventh day is commemorated, "Today is the seventh day, which is one week in the Omer." The eighth day is marked, "Today is the eighth day, which is one week and one day in the Omer," etc.

When the [Temple stood in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem), a sheaf of new-cut barley was presented before the altar on the second day of Unleavened Bread. Josephus writes

On the second day of unleavened bread, that is to say the sixteenth, our people partake of the crops which they have reaped and which have not been touched till then, and esteeming it right first to do homage to God, to whom they owe the abundance of these gifts, they offer to him the first-fruits of the barley in the following way. After parching and crushing the little sheaf of ears and purifying the barley for grinding, they bring to the altar an *issaron* for God, and, having flung a handful thereof on the altar, they leave the rest for the use of the priests. Thereafter all are permitted, publicly or individually, to begin harvest.

Since the destruction of the Temple, this offering is brought in word rather than deed.

One explanation for the Counting of the Omer is that it shows the connection between Passover and Shavuot. The physical freedom that the Hebrews achieved at the Exodus from Egypt was only the beginning of a process that climaxed with the spiritual freedom they gained at the giving of the Torah at [Mount Sinai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Mount_Sinai). Another explanation is that the newborn nation which emerged after the Exodus needed time to learn their new responsibilities vis-a-vis Torah and [mitzvot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitzvot) before accepting God's law. The distinction between the Omer offering—a measure of barley, typically animal fodder—and the Shavuot offering—two loaves of wheat bread, human food—symbolizes the transition process.

**Seventh day of Passover**

*Shvi'i shel Pesach* (שביעי של פסח "seventh [day] of Passover") is another full [Jewish holiday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_holiday), with special prayer services and festive meals. Outside the [Land of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Israel) in the [Jewish diaspora](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_diaspora), *Shvi'i shel Pesach* is celebrated on both the seventh and eighth days of Passover. This holiday commemorates the day the [Children of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_Israel) reached the [Red Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Sea) and witnessed both the miraculous "Splitting of the Sea," the drowning of all the Egyptian chariots, horses and soldiers that pursued them, and the [Passage of the Red Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passage_of_the_Red_Sea). According to the [Midrash](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrash), only the [Pharaoh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh) was spared to give testimony to the miracle that occurred.

[Hasidic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism) [Rebbes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebbe) traditionally hold a [*tish*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tish_(Hasidic_celebration)) on the night of *Shvi'i shel Pesach* and place a cup or bowl of water on the table before them. They use this opportunity to speak about the Splitting of the Sea to their disciples, and sing songs of praise to God.

**Second Passover**

The "Second Passover" ([Pesach Sheni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesach_Sheni)) on the 14th of Iyar in the [Hebrew Calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Calendar) is mentioned in the [Hebrew Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible) ([Numbers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Numbers) 9:6-13) as a make-up day for people who were unable to offer the pesach sacrifice at the appropriate time due to ritual impurity or distance from [Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem). Just as on the first Pesach night, breaking bones from the second Paschal offering (Numbers 9:12) or leaving meat over until morning (Numbers 9:12) is prohibited.

Today, Pesach Sheni on the 14th of Iyar has the status of a very minor holiday (so much so that many of the Jewish people have never even heard of it, and it essentially does not exist outside of [Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism) and traditional [Conservative Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism)). There are not really any special prayers or observances that are considered Jewish law. The only change in the liturgy is that in some communities [*Tachanun*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tachanun), a penitential prayer omitted on holidays, is not said. There is a custom, though not Jewish law, to eat just one piece of matzo on that night.

**Traditional foods**



[Matzah brei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzah_brei) (fried [matzo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzo) and egg), a popular Passover dish

Because the house is free of chametz for eight days, the Jewish household typically eats different foods during the week of Passover. These include:

* [*Matzah brei*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzah_brei) – Softened matzo fried with egg and fat; served either savory or sweet
* Matzo cereal – Matzo meal boiled in water and often served with milk and butter
* Matzo [kugel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kugel) – A kugel made with matzo instead of noodles
* [*Charoset*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charoset) – Chopped or ground apples and nuts in wine
* *Chrain* – Horseradish and beet relish
* [Gefilte fish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gefilte_fish) – Poached fish patties or fish balls made from a mixture of ground deboned fish, mostly [carp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carp) or [pike](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pike_(fish))
* [Chicken soup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicken_soup) with [matzah balls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matzah_ball) (*kneydlach*) – Chicken soup served with matzo-meal dumplings
* [Rice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice), often with [saffron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saffron) or [raisins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raisin) – Nearly all [Sephardi Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews) and many [Mizrachi Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizrachi_Jews) consider rice to be an essential food for the Passover table; [Ashkenazi Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkenazi_Jews) and [Hasidic Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism) do not eat rice during Passover as a matter of [minhag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minhag). According to the [Talmud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) and the commentary of [Rashi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashi), rice is not *chametz*. However, there is a concern that in storage, rice may have been contaminated with even one kernel of wheat or other grains. Those who eat rice inspect it carefully prior to cooking.

**Sermons, liturgy, and song**

The story of Passover, with its message that slaves can go free, and that the future can be better than the present, has inspired a number of religious sermons, prayers, and songs—including [spirituals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_(music)) (what used to be called "Negro Spirituals"), within the African-American community.

Rabbi [Philip R. Alstat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_R._Alstat), an early leader of [Conservative Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism), known for his fiery rhetoric and powerful oratory skills, wrote and spoke in 1939 about the power of the Passover story during the rise of Nazi persecution and terror:

Perhaps in our generation the counsel of our Talmudic sages may seem superfluous, for today the story of our enslavement in Egypt is kept alive not only by ritualistic symbolism, but even more so by tragic realism. We are the contemporaries and witnesses of its daily re-enactment. Are not our hapless brethren in the German Reich eating "the bread of affliction"? Are not their lives embittered by complete disenfranchisement and forced labor? Are they not lashed mercilessly by brutal taskmasters behind the walls of concentration camps? Are not many of their men-folk being murdered in cold blood? Is not the ruthlessness of the Egyptian Pharaoh surpassed by the sadism of the Nazi dictators?  
And yet, even in this hour of disaster and degradation, it is still helpful to "visualize oneself among those who had gone forth out of Egypt." It gives stability and equilibrium to the spirit. Only our estranged kinsmen, the assimilated, and the de-Judaized, go to pieces under the impact of the blow....But those who visualize themselves among the groups who have gone forth from the successive Egypts in our history never lose their sense of perspective, nor are they overwhelmed by confusion and despair.... It is this faith, born of racial experience and wisdom, which gives the oppressed the strength to outlive the oppressors and to endure until the day of ultimate triumph when we shall "be brought forth from bondage unto freedom, from sorrow unto joy, from mourning unto festivity, from darkness unto great light, and from servitude unto redemption.

**See also**

* [Passover Seder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder)
* [Passover Seder Plate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder_Plate)
* [Gebrochts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gebrochts)
* [Kitniyot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitniyot)
* [Fast of the Firstborn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast_of_the_Firstborn)
* [Haggadah of Pesach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haggadah_of_Pesach)
* [Passover (Christian holiday)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_(Christian_holiday))
* [Quartodecimanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartodecimanism)

Your ratings have expired

Please reevaluate this page and submit new ratings.

An error has occurred. Please try again later.

Thanks! Your ratings have been saved.

Please take a moment to complete a short survey.

Start surveyMaybe later

Thanks! Your ratings have been saved.

Do you want to create an account?

An account will help you track your edits, get involved in discussions, and be a part of the community.

Create an accountorLog inMaybe later

Thanks! Your ratings have been saved.

Did you know that you can edit this page?

Edit this pageMaybe later

[Categories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Categories):

* [Passover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Passover)
* [April observances](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:April_observances)
* [Hallel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Hallel)
* [Jewish holy days](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Jewish_holy_days)
* [March observances](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:March_observances)
* [Spring holidays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Spring_holidays)

Hidden categories:

* [Wikipedia articles needing clarification from January 2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Wikipedia_articles_needing_clarification_from_January_2012)
* [All articles with unsourced statements](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:All_articles_with_unsourced_statements)
* [Articles with unsourced statements from March 2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_with_unsourced_statements_from_March_2012)
* [Articles containing Hebrew language text](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_containing_Hebrew_language_text)
* [Articles with unsourced statements from October 2010](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_with_unsourced_statements_from_October_2010)
* [Articles with unsourced statements from April 2011](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_with_unsourced_statements_from_April_2011)
* [Articles with unsourced statements from March 2010](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_with_unsourced_statements_from_March_2010)

This page was last modified on 8 April 2012 at 13:22.