

How Passover is celebrated today

The celebrations last for seven or eight days, depending on where you live. Some families clean their houses thoroughly to remove all crumbs of chametz (leaven). This remembers the Jews leaving Egypt who did not have time to let their bread rise. In many Jewish homes children enjoy taking part in a ritual search for any specks of leaven left behind.



Lighting the candles

Once the house and the participants are ceremonially clean, the Passover seder can begin. The woman of the house says a blessing and lights the Passover candles. It is appropriate that the woman brings light into the home, because it was through the woman that the light of the world, Messiah Jesus, came into the world (Gen. 3:15).

The Seder

On the evening before the Passover begins, a special service called a Seder ('Order') takes place over a meal with family and friends in the home.

The Seder plate on the table consists of:

- A lamb bone
- A roasted egg
- A green vegetable to dip in salt water
- Bitter herbs made from horseradish
- Charoset (a paste of chopped apples, walnuts and wine)

On the table, there are three Matzot (unleavened bread) on top of each other. At the start of the Seder, the middle Matzah is broken and the largest piece is hidden. During the Seder the children hunt for it. The one who finds it receives a small prize.



Four small glasses of wine are drunk to represent the four expressions of freedom which refer to the Israelites being brought out of slavery. The wine symbolises joy and happiness. An extra cup of wine is placed on the table and the door is left open for Elijah. Jews believe that the prophet Elijah will reappear to announce the coming of the Messiah and will do so at Pesach (Passover).

During the evening the story of how the Israelites fled from Egypt is retold from a book called the Haggadah ('Narration').

Everyone at the Seder each has a cushion to lean on. This is to remind them that they are now free people, no longer slaves.

Everybody takes part in reading the Haggadah, some in Hebrew and some in English, many songs are sung and four questions are asked by the youngest child. The father answers.

Passover Customs and Practices

It is traditional on Passover to only eat unleavened food. Many rid their entire house of hametz (food that is not kosher for Passover) or sell their leavened food to a non-Jew for the eight days of the holiday. The Passover Seder is for the most part held on the first and second night of Passover, though some only participate in a Seder on the first night. During the Seder, participants recount the story of the Exodus while drinking four cups of wine.



Haggadah (meaning 'To Tell')

The Haggadah is the story of the birth of the Jews as a people. It deals primarily with the events in Egypt which led from slavery to liberation, though it also spans the entire period from Abraham to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. One could say that the Haggadah is our national birth certificate as well as our Declaration of Independence. More than just a historical document, it also speaks of the ideals and values which constitute the essence of our national consciousness and identity.

The word haggadah means to tell, or to relate. The Haggadah is a vivid narrative which is set in the context of a parent-child dialogue. Passover, with the Haggadah as its focus, tells every Jew three things: **who you are, where you came from, and what you stand for.**

The message inherent in the Haggadah is that Jewish identity and continuity hinge on encouraging children to ask questions, and being prepared as parents to provide sensitive and substantive answers. In Judaism, being learned, knowledgeable, and wise is not only a goal, it's a prerequisite.

The Four Questions

During the Passover meal the youngest person asks 4 questions. This is to make sure that the traditions of Passover are passed from one generation to another.

The 4 Questions are:

- 1. Why is this night different from all other nights of the year?*
- 2. On all other nights we eat all kinds of bread and crackers. Why do we only eat matzah on Pesach (Passover)?*
- 3. On other nights we eat many kinds of vegetables and herbs. Why do we eat bitter herbs and maror at our Seder?*
- 4. On other nights we do not usually dip one food into another. At our Seder we dip the parsley in salt water and the bitter herbs into the charoset. Why do we dip foods twice?*
- 5. On other nights we eat sitting up straight. Why do we lean on a pillow tonight?*

The answers to these questions can be found on a separate sheet on iChild.

Koreh

The Hillel sandwich Rabbi Hillel put together, consists of matzah bread and charoset with maror - bitter herbs (usually horseradish). The effect of eating this mixture makes you cry and that reminds people of the tears shed for slavery.

Tzafon

This is the Afikomen. This is the half of the middle matzah which is put aside at the beginning of the Seder meal. In many families the afikomen is hidden, and at the end of the meal the children are invited to search for the lost piece. The one who finds it customarily exchanges it for a small gift (chocolate), and then the last piece of matzah is shared among the whole family as the last thing eaten before the meal ends.

The meal ends with a Psalm of praise, Psalm 117, followed by a toast with the 4th cup of wine.