



TEMPLE CHAI

# Passover

Questions and Answers to help you more fully experience and enjoy this holiday.



## What does the word Pesach mean?

Pesach is the Hebrew word for the holiday we know as Passover and means to pass through, to pass over, to exempt or to spare. It refers to the fact that God "passed over" the houses of the Jews when slaying the firstborn of Egypt. In English, the holiday is known as Passover. "Pesach" is also the name of the sacrificial offering (a lamb) that was made in the Temple on this holiday.

## What does Passover commemorate?

Passover is one of the most frequently celebrated Jewish holidays. It recounts the history of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt and liberation from Egyptian slavery.

## When does Passover take place?

Passover always occurs on the same date in the Jewish calendar, but not on the same date in the secular calendar. The Jewish calendar is designed to keep Jewish holidays at the same season of the year and the same phase of the moon. Passover will always begin on the full moon in the spring. The Hebrew date is 15 Nissan.

## How many days do we celebrate Passover?

In many Reform Jewish communities, Passover is celebrated for seven days. In the State of Israel, there are seven days of Pesach and only one Seder. In more traditional Jewish communities--including both Orthodox and Conservative communities - Passover is celebrated for eight days. At Temple Chai we celebrate for eight days.

## How do I prepare for Passover?

Preparing for Passover involves removing foods that are leavened or fermented, such as bread, vinegar or beer from your home. These foods are called "chametz" in Hebrew. Chametz also includes anything made from the five major grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt) that has not been completely cooked within 18 minutes after first coming into contact with water. Traditional Jews remove all the leavened foods such as bread, pasta and crackers from their home. Some people move the "chametz" foods to a cabinet or a box and don't touch them until Passover is over.

## Why don't we eat leavened foods on Passover?

The Israelites leaving Egypt were in a hurry, and did not have time to let their bread rise. Removing the chametz is also a symbolic way of removing the "puffiness" (arrogance, pride, vanity) from our souls. "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses....." Exodus 12:15

## How is Passover celebrated?

Friends and families gather for a special, ritual meal called a Seder. The Seder takes place on the first night of Passover. If you choose to have a second Seder, it is held on the second night. In Jewish tradition, the new day begins at sundown.

## What is a Seder?

Seder is the Hebrew word for "order." It consists of a festive meal in which we tell the story of the Jewish people and the Exodus from Egypt. Details regarding how to conduct a Seder are found in the "Hagaddah."

## Why do some people have two Seders?

In the ancient world, the new month was formally declared when the new moon was sighted in Jerusalem. By the time word reached the Diaspora, it was uncertain when, exactly, the new month had begun. An extra day of observance, the second Seder, was added to the holiday celebrations in the Diaspora in order to be certain regarding the date. This custom remains today in many traditional communities.

## What is the Diaspora?

It is the Jewish population that lives outside the land of Israel.

## What is a Haggadah (plural Haggadot)?

The Haggadah is a book which serves as our guide for the Seder. It literally means "the telling." The Haggadah includes the order of the Seder and the story of the Exodus from Egypt, along with additional prayers and songs.

## How do I choose the right Haggadah for our Seder?

There are a variety of Haggadot. You can find age appropriate, family, LGBT, liberal, spiritual and traditional Haggadot. The important thing is to find one that is right for you, your family and your Seder.

## Where do I buy a Haggadah?

You may purchase them at your local Judaica Store, your synagogue Judaica Shop, online, and in many local bookstores.

## Do I need one for every person who attends the Seder?

It is recommended that each person has a Haggadah so that everyone may participate in the Seder.

## What should my Passover table have on it?

2 Candles (Shabbat type) – candles to be lit at the beginning of the Seder

Seder plate (items for the plate are listed in the next question)

3 Matzot (plural for Matzah) on a plate with cloth covering

Salt water

Cups for wine/grape juice for each person

Elijah's Cup - filled with wine/grape juice for the biblical prophet Elijah who, according to Jewish tradition, will usher in the messianic age.

Afikoman bag or napkin (see below for explanation)

### Some New Traditions:

- Empty plate - reminding us of the challenge of homelessness
- Orange - symbolizing inclusivity (Contemporary midrash suggests that a man angrily denouncing feminism said that a woman belongs on a bima (pulpit) the way an orange belongs on a Seder plate. To support women's rightful place in Jewish life, people began including an orange on their Passover tables)
- Olives - symbolizing peace
- Miriam's cup filled with water - reminding us of the important role of Jewish women in history

## What is the Seder Plate?

A plate that holds special foods that are important in the Seder.

These foods are:

- Roasted hard-boiled egg - symbolizes rebirth; the roasting symbolizes the sacrifice that was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem in ancient times and offered on Passover Eve
- Maror - any bitter herb. Many people use horseradish, which reminds us of the bitter lives of the Jewish People as slaves of the Egyptians
- Roasted shank bone - represents the Passover sacrificial offering. If you are vegetarian, a beet or carrot may be substituted
- Charoset - a mortar-like mixture representing the bricks made by the Israelite slaves
- Spring vegetable (parsley) - commemorates the arrival of spring

## Why 3 Matzot on the Passover Table?

There are three matzot on the Passover table. The middle matzah is broken at the beginning of the Seder (the Haggadah will tell you when to do this); half is hidden at the beginning of the meal. At the conclusion of the Seder, we search for this matzah, which is called the "Afikoman." (See below). Matzah is the only bread that is eaten with a Passover Seder meal.

## What is the Afikoman?

Afikoman, the Greek word for dessert, is a piece of the middle matzah from the 3 matzot that are on the Passover table. It is hidden at the beginning of the Seder. If children are present, they engage in a search for this treasure. The Seder is not complete until the Afikoman is found and returned to the table. Often a small gift is given to the person who finds it. A small piece is eaten by each participant.

## Do I need to purchase the Seder plate, Matzah plate and Elijah's cup and if so, where?

If you choose to purchase these items you can buy them at your local Judaica Store, online, or at a synagogue Judaica Shop. You may also use items from your home such as a wine glass for Elijah's cup, a large plate for the Matzah and a large plate that will hold the Seder plate food items.

## Is there special Matzah to eat during Passover?

Look for Matzah that is "kosher for Passover" in your local store.

## Is there special wine for Passover?

Any kind of wine is acceptable for your Seder. Some people prefer to buy Israeli wines or kosher wines for this holiday.

## What is the mitzvah/obligation on Passover?

As we read in the Torah, "You shall tell your children...." Exodus 12:26-27. That is why we have a Passover Seder - to retell the story of the Exodus.

## How do we make the Passover Seder relevant in today's world?

We need to appreciate the blessing of freedom and remember our history. On a personal level, we ask ourselves - What challenges did we and/or members of our family face since our last Passover gathering or during the past year? In Hebrew, the word for Egypt is "Mitzrayim." This comes from a root meaning "a narrow place." We reflect on places in our own lives where we hope and pray for liberation.

## Recipes for Passover

### Traditional Passover Sponge Cake

This traditional recipe for sponge cake can be used like you would for a trifle or shortcake with fruit, whipped topping or other fillings that are kosher for Passover.

- 8 egg yolks
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 Tbs. orange zest
- 3/4 cup matzah cake meal
- 1/4 cup potato starch
- 8 egg whites
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 1/2 Tbs. fresh orange juice

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Cut parchment paper to line the bottom of a 10-inch tube pan. Do not grease the pan.

In a medium bowl, whip egg yolks until light. Gradually add 1 cup sugar and orange zest; continue whipping until thick and pale, about 7 minutes. Sift together the matzo cake meal and potato starch; set aside. In a large glass or metal mixing bowl, beat egg whites until foamy. Gradually add remaining 1/2 cup sugar, continuing to beat until whites form stiff peaks. Fold the dry ingredients into the yolk mixture alternately with the juice. Fold 1/3 of the whites into the batter, then quickly fold in remaining whites until no streaks remain. Spread evenly into the prepared pan.

Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes in the preheated oven, until cake springs back to the touch. Invert onto a wire rack to cool. Run a knife around the sides of the cake before removing from the pan.

### Angelina De Leon's Matzah (From the New York Times Passover Cookbook)

This recipe dates from the Spanish Inquisition. It survives because it was used as evidence in the trial of Angelina de Leon, to prove that she was a Jew. Honey and black pepper impart a sweet and spicy flavor.

- 4 cups white flour (Matzah cake meal may be substituted for the flour, though the dough does not roll out as well. Increase the water by one half and bake for 3 minutes longer.)
- 1 Tbs. freshly ground black pepper
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- 6 Tbs. honey
- 4 Tsp. olive oil
- 8 Tbs. water

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees

In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour and pepper. Mix well.

Mix in the eggs, honey, olive oil, and just enough water to make a very dry dough. Do not over mix.

Divide the dough into 12 equal portions and shape into balls. On a lightly floured surface, roll each ball into a thin disk about 8 inches in diameter. Pierce all over with fork.

Bake on cookie sheets for 6 to 8 minutes, or until Matzot are puffed and begin to brown. Cool on racks.

## Charoset

This fruit, nut and wine mix is eaten during the Seder. It is meant to remind us of the mortar used by the Jews to build during the period of slavery. It should have a coarse texture. The recipe below makes a large quantity, but we usually make more before the holiday is over as it is a popular item. Other fruits or nuts can be used.

4 medium apples, 2 tart and 2 sweet  
1/2 cup finely chopped almonds or walnuts  
1/4 cup sweet wine  
1/4 cup dry wine  
1 Tbs. cinnamon

Shred or chop the apples. Add all other ingredients. Allow to sit for 3-6 hours, until the wine is absorbed by the other ingredients.

## Sephardic Charoset

6 oz pitted dates  
6 oz dried fig  
6 oz dried apricots  
6 oz white raisins  
2 macintosh apples cored, peeled and cut into small pieces  
1 cup walnuts  
sweet wine to taste  
ground cinnamon to taste

Chop walnuts into small pieces. Chop dried fruit in a food processor in small batches with a little bit of apples and nuts in each batch. When done, blend all together. Moisten with wine if necessary. You can serve as is, or roll into balls the size of a whole walnut and refrigerate a few hours before serving. Roll balls in cinnamon and shake off excess right before serving.

This brochure was created by Temple Chai clergy, under the loving guidance of Toni Dusik with support from Marilyn Bowie, Kathy Darrow, Robb Sinert and the Temple Chai Outreach Committee.

## Temple Chai

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