



PASSOVER NEWSLETTER

2021 ✪ 5781

About Passover

What Is Passover?

The eight-day festival of Passover commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. It is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan, which falls on **March 27- April 3, 2021**. The festival is observed by avoiding leavened food, and it is highlighted by the Seder meals that include four cups of wine, eating matzah and bitter herbs, and retelling the story of the Exodus.

In Hebrew it is known as Pesach, which means 'to pass over', because G-d passed over the Jewish homes when killing the Egyptian firstborn on the very first Passover eve.

The Passover Story in a Nutshell

After many decades of slavery to the Egyptian pharaohs, during which time the Israelites were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors, G-d saw the people's distress and sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message: 'Send forth My people, so that they may serve Me.' But despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed G-d's command. G-d then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues, afflicting them and destroying everything from their livestock to their crops.

At the stroke of midnight of 15 Nissan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), G-d visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, killing all their firstborn. While doing so, G-d spared the children of Israel, 'passing over' their homes—hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh's resistance was broken, and he virtually chased his former slaves out of the land. The Israelites left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have time to rise. Six hundred thousand adult males, plus many more women and children, left Egypt on that day and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their birth as G-d's chosen people.

In ancient times, when the temple existed, the Passover observance included the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, which was roasted and eaten at the Seder on the first night of the holiday. This was the case until Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the 1st century.

Passover Observances

The first two days of Passover, which commemorate the Exodus, and last two days, which commemorate the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, are full-fledged holidays. We light holiday candles at night, recite *kiddush* and enjoy lavish holiday meals on both nights and days. We don't go to work, drive, write, or switch on or off electric devices. We are permitted to cook and to carry outdoors. The middle four days are called Chol Hamoed, semi-festive 'intermediate days,' when most forms of work are permitted.

To commemorate the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when they left Egypt, we don't eat—or even possess—any *chametz* from midday of the day before Passover until the conclusion of the holiday. *Chametz* means leavened grain—any food or drink that contains even a trace of wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt or their derivatives, and which wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation. This includes bread, cake, cookies, cereal, pasta, and most alcoholic beverages. Moreover, almost any processed food or drink can be assumed to be *chametz* unless certified otherwise.

Ridding our homes of *chametz* is an intensive process of cleaning for *chametz* during the weeks before Passover, and culminates with a ceremonial search for *chametz* on the night before Passover. A destruction of the *chametz* ceremony on the morning before the holiday then follows. *Chametz* that cannot be disposed of can be sold to a non-Jew (and bought back after the holiday).

Instead of *chametz*, we eat matzah—flat unleavened bread. It is a mitzvah to partake of matzah on the two Seder nights (see below for more on this), and during the rest of the holiday it is optional. One should use handmade *shmurah* matzah, which has been zealously guarded against moisture from the moment of the harvest.

The Seder

The highlight of Passover is the Seder, observed on each of the first two nights of the holiday. The Seder is a fifteen-step family-oriented tradition and ritual-packed feast.

The focal points of the Seder are:

- Eating matzah.
- Eating bitter herbs—to commemorate the bitter slavery endured by the Israelites.
- Drinking four cups of wine or grape juice—a royal drink to celebrate our newfound freedom.
- The recitation of the Haggadah, a liturgy that describes in detail the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Haggadah is the fulfillment of the biblical obligation to recount to our children the story of the Exodus on the night of Passover. It begins with a child asking the traditional 'Four Questions.'

Passover Preparations

Kashering for Pesach

VAAD HOEIR PESACH GUIDE: Detailed information about Kashering for Pesach can be found in the Vaad Hoeir Pesach Guide for 2021 at <https://ovkosher.org/pesach2021/>

KASHERING UTENSILS: *For information on kashering utensils for Pesach, please call Rabbi Smason to verify procedures.*

MICROWAVE OVENS: A microwave oven which is used during the year should not be used on Pesach.

REGULAR OVENS: Regular ovens are kashered by 'libun', a process for burning away any chometz. First, clean the oven with Easy-Off, then don't use it for 24 hours, and finally, turn on the oven for at least one hour. Some Rabbis suggest longer; speak to **Rabbi Smason** for details

Foods for Pesach

VEGETABLES: Vegetables that may be used on Pesach are: fresh beets, squash, peppers, potatoes, radishes, scallions, spinach, cabbage, carrots, celery, tomatoes, garlic, lettuce, turnips, zucchini, mushrooms, parsnips and onions. **NOTE:** On the nights of the **Seders**, according to some customs, only the following vegetables may be used: celery, lettuce, onions & potatoes.

KITNYOS: Kitnyos is the Hebrew word for legumes. During Passover, Kitnyos has taken on a broader meaning. The rabbis of the Talmud decided that, in addition to chometz, kitnyos should not be eaten on Pesach, at least by Ashkenazic Jews. **Kitnyos now** includes the following: beans, green beans, peanuts, peas, corn, rice, sesame seeds, caraway seeds, sunflower seeds, soybeans and tofu. It also include the following ingredients: ascorbic acid, BHT, BHA (in corn oil), calcium ascorbate, citric acid, confectioner's sugar, corn dextrose, emulsifiers, flavors (may also be chometz), glucose, hydrolyzed vegetable protein (may also be chometz), isolated soy protein, isomerized syrup, lecithin, malto-dextrin, mustard flour, sodium ascorbate, sodium erythorbate, sorbitan, sorbitol, stabilizers, starch (may also be chometz). Ask Rabbi Smason if you have any questions.

Mechiras Chometz – Selling Chametz

All non-Pesach food that cannot be eaten before Pesach can be sold to a non-Jew. Rabbi Smason will be available to act as your agent for the selling of chametz. It is customary to make a donation when you sell Chametz. *Please bring or send your check payable to NHBZ with the notation 'Selling Chametz' to our office.* **Chametz must be sold by Wednesday, March 25. You can sell your chametz in the following ways:**

Your authorization form MUST be in Rabbi Smason's possession no later than 3:00 P.M. Thursday, March 26. If you plan on sending the form by regular mail, please allow sufficient time for its arrival to the NHBZ office no later than Wednesday, March 25.

It is customary to offer an honorarium the Rabbi for this service. If you choose to do so, then payments should be made by cash or by check directly to Rabbi Smason.

If you have any questions about the process of the sale of chametz, don't hesitate to contact Rabbi Smason by email (Pepshort613@gmail.com) or phone (314 749-5271)

Please see end of this newsletter for the authorization form.

Bedikas Chametz (Search for Chametz)

The search for chametz takes place on **Thursday, March 25, after 8:03 p.m.** Place **one** piece of chametz (such as pieces of bread) in a room where food is usually eaten during the year. Recite the following blessing **before** the search, gather the chametz with a feather and wooden spoon, by the light of a candle, and place the piece of chametz into a paper bag. This is found in Hebrew at the beginning of most Haggadahs.

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom
A-sher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Ve-tzi-vo-nu Al Bee-ur Cho-metz.

Blessed are You, L-rd our d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by
His commandments, and has commanded us concerning the removal of *chametz*.

After the search, recite the following declaration.

Kol chamira v'chamia d'ika virshuti, d'la chamitay oodla viartay oodla y'dana lay libatale v'lehevay he'kare k'afra d'ara

Any chametz or leaven which is in my possession, which I have neither seen nor removed, and about which I am unaware, shall be considered nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth

Erev Pesach - Passover is Here

TANNIS B'CHORIM (FAST OF THE FIRSTBORN) – SIYUM: The **Torah** relates that the first born Egyptians were slain during the tenth plague, but the first born Jews were saved. It is therefore customary for the first born (B'Chorim) to fast on Erev Pesach in thanksgiving to **G-d**. The Rabbis have ruled, however, anyone attending a Siyum - the completion of the study of a book of the Talmud - is permitted to partake of food served in honor of the Siyum. Hence, the firstborn are exempt from fasting by attending the Siyum. See: "**Addendum: Special Laws for Pesach 2021**"

BIYUR CHOMETZ (DESTRUCTION OF CHOMETZ): The destruction of all chametz that has not been consumed or sold, together with the pieces of bread from the search, the feather, spoon and candle should take place on **Friday, March 26 by 12:06 pm**. After the burning of chametz, we recite statement of nullification in which we renounce the ownership of chametz. This formula is found in Hebrew at the beginning of most Haggadahs.

Kol chamira v'hamia d'ika virshuti dachazitay oodla hazitay, dachamitay oola chamitay, d'viartay oodla viartay libatale v'lehevay he'kare k'afra d'ara

Any chametz or leaven which is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have seen it or not, shall be considered nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

Candle Lighting

We light candles on the two Seder nights, and the last two evenings of Passover. See the last page of this newsletter for candle-lighting times. On the first two nights of Passover, we recite both of the following blessings. On the last two nights, we recite only the first blessing. See the schedule at the end of this newsletter for candle lighting times.

The blessings are found in Hebrew at the beginning of most Haggadahs.

1. Bo-ruch a-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ho-olom a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-sov ve-tzi-vo-nu le-had-lik ner shel (Sha-bos v'shel) Yom Tov.

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the light of (the Sabbath and) Yom Tov.

2. Bo-ruch a-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ho-olom she-he-che-ya-nu vi-kee-yi-ma-nu vi-hi-gee-an-u liz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and let us reach this time.

The Seder

SEDER TIMES: In order to celebrate the Pesach Seder at the traditional time, Kiddush and the Seder should not begin until after nightfall, after 8:05 pm on March 27, and 8:06 p.m. on March 28. Check with Rabbi Smason about children and senior citizens who need to eat at earlier times.

THE HAGGADAH: The Haggadah should be read and the melodies should be chanted by all members of the family, preferably in Hebrew, but if not, certainly it should be read in English. It is a mitzvah to retell the story of the Exodus and the history of Pesach.

KIDDUSH: We recite Kiddush and drink 4 cups of wine at the Seder, reminding us of the 4 expressions of deliverance found in the Torah.

SEDER PLATE: Use the diagram at the beginning of most Haggadahs to set up the Seder plate.

PARTICIPATE IN THE SEDER: Give everyone the opportunity to participate in the Seder. If you have any questions concerning Pesach, or the Seder, do not hesitate to call **Rabbi Smason**.

After the Seder

SEPHIRAS HAOMER (Counting the Omer): Beginning with the 2nd night of Pesach, and continuing for 49 nights, we count the Omer, in accord with the Biblical injunction: *From the Morrow of Pesach, From the Day of Your Bringing the Omer, You Shall Count Seven Full Weeks*. An omer is a unit of measure. On the second day of Passover, in the days of the Temple, an omer of barley was cut down and brought to the Temple as an offering. This grain offering was referred to as the Omer. The counting of the Omer must take place after nightfall. Immediately before stating the daily and weekly number in the Omer, we recite the blessing *Al Sephirat HaOmer*. The 49 days link the festival of Pesach, the celebration of our physical redemption, with the festival of Shavuos, which occurs on the 50th day, when we celebrate our spiritual redemption, the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This period is a time of partial mourning, during which weddings, parties, and joyful events are not conducted, in memory of a plague during the lifetime of Rabbi Akiba that killed 24,000 of his students. Haircuts during this time are also forbidden.

THE LAST TWO DAYS OF PASSOVER - YIZKOR: The seventh and eighth days of Passover are celebrated as Yom Tov. Like other Yomim Tovim, we do no work, other than certain acts connected to food preparation, we recite holiday prayers, and light candles on the eve of both days. The seventh day of Passover commemorates the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. During morning services on the eighth day, we recite Yizkor memorial prayers for departed relatives.

A Zoom Yizkor will take place on Wednesday, March 31 at 5:30 P.M. Link to Yizkor service: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86481064502>