



# Passover



## What & When:

The Jewish holiday of Passover (or *Pesach* in Hebrew), a holiday that celebrates freedom, is celebrated for 8 days (some celebrate for 7 days) beginning on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of *Nisan*. The holiday begins sometime between late March and late April on the Gregorian calendar. Like all other Jewish holidays, Passover begins at sundown the evening before the first day and ends an hour after sundown on the last day.

## History:

Passover celebrates the passage of the Jewish people (called the Israelites in the Book of Exodus in the Torah-the first five books of Hebrew Scripture), from slavery in Egypt to freedom over 3,000 years ago. Due to their hasty departure from Egypt, the Israelites did not have enough time to fully bake their bread. Therefore, the *Torah* commands Jews not to eat any bread products during these 8 days, and instead to eat *matzah* - unleavened bread – (“leavening” includes yeast and other products which may cause bread to rise). *Matzah* also symbolizes the bread of affliction that the Israelites ate as slaves.

## Observances & Customs:

The story of the exodus from Egypt is told each year on the **first two nights of Passover** at the *Seder*, a festive ceremonial dinner which includes rituals that stimulate all the senses. The *Seder*, which literally means ‘order’, is designed to fulfill the commandment that each participant should feel as if he or she had been in Egypt, able to taste the bitterness of slavery and the sweetness of freedom. **CJE holds Seders for residents at both Lieberman and Weinberg.**

The *Haggadah* (literally “the telling”), the book that is used at the *seder*, relates the story of Passover. Everyone at the *Seder* is invited to participate in the readings and songs in the *Haggadah* which ends with the wish “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

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If you have questions, please contact Susan Buchbinder x1695, or Rabbi Michael Schorin x3253

Jewish law prohibits the consumption or possession of **chametz** (foods with leavening which are not kosher for Passover) during this holiday. In addition to the usual laws of keeping kosher practiced by many Jews, on Passover there are additional restrictions. The Chicago Rabbinical Council (CRC) publishes a special Passover Guide each year listing permitted and prohibited foods. It is available on line at [www.crcweb.org](http://www.crcweb.org)

Tradition holds that before the holiday, the home should be thoroughly cleaned and all traces of *chametz* removed or sold to someone who is not Jewish (with special rules as to how it reverts back to its owner after the holiday). The kitchen, and everything in it, is then “kashered” (made *kosher*) for Passover. Many Jews substitute special sets of Passover dishes, pots & pans and utensils, as certain materials cannot be kashered.

The cost of preparing for Passover can be very high. Historically, **ma'ot chittim** (literally “money for wheat”) was given to the poor so all could celebrate the holiday. Today, many Jews make donations and help charitable organizations prepare and deliver boxes of food to needy Jewish people prior to the holiday. If you have clients who may need this assistance, you may let the CJE Consumer Assistance Department know so that they can be added to a delivery list.

### **Traditional Foods:**

During the *Seder*, there are a number of symbolic foods placed on the *Seder* plate in the center of the table. The meaning of each symbol is explained as the *Haggadah* is read. The roasted **shankbone** is a reminder of the Paschal lamb which was offered at the time of the Exodus. **Maror** (bitter herbs-usually horseradish) recalls the bitter suffering of the slaves. **Charoset** is a mix of apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine looking like mortar used by the slaves to make bricks. **Karpas** (parsley) dipped in salt water symbolizes spring and the tears shed by the slaves. A **roasted egg** reminds us of the coming of spring and hope for the future.

The festive meal might include chicken soup with *matzah balls*, gefite fish, chicken or beef, and potato kugel (pudding). *Matzah* is eaten throughout the holiday and all forms of bread are forbidden. For Jews whose families originated from Eastern Europe, rice and certain legume (bean) vegetables are also prohibited.

Here is a picture of a *Seder* plate. Below it is a link to a website that features definitions of the different objects on the *Seder* plate.



<http://www.nj006.urj.net/Seder/plate.html>

Here is another good link:

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish\\_Holidays/Passover/Passover\\_101.shtml?HYJH](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Passover/Passover_101.shtml?HYJH)

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