

What Is Passover?

Passover (Pesakh in Hebrew) is a holiday that celebrates the Jews' Exodus from Egypt. It's a time to celebrate our freedom and to remember and commit ourselves to the cause of those still in bondage. Its most essential ritual is the sharing of the seder meal.

When is Passover?

Passover begins on the 15th day of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar, and typically falls in April. Passover is celebrated for seven days by some Jewish communities and for eight days by others; the discrepancy dates back to the ancient Jewish calendar.

What do I need to celebrate?

Bedikat Khametz:

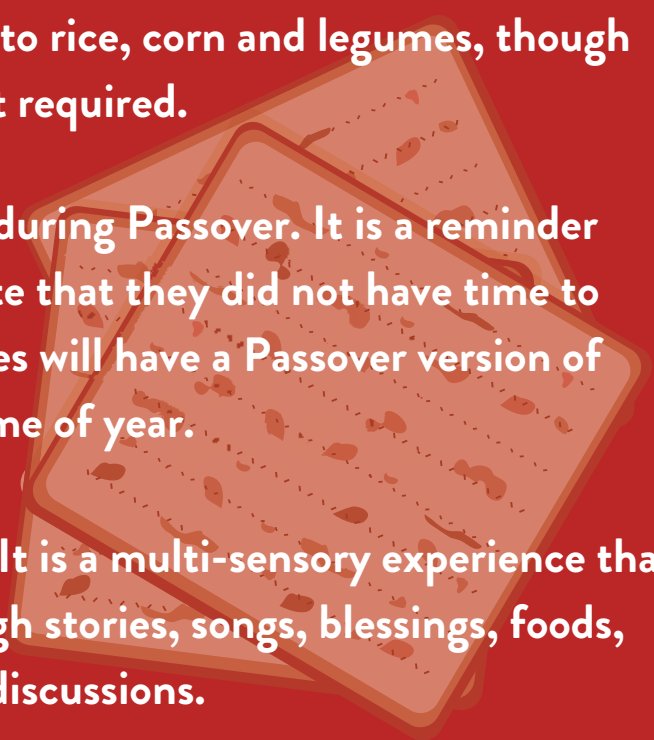
The night before Passover, it's customary to remove all khametz (leavened foods) from the household. Traditionally, this is done as a sort of hide-and-seek performed by candlelight or flashlight. Crumbs are gathered with a feather and wooden spoon and then thrown out or burned the next morning before the holiday officially begins. Leavened foods are banished from the household throughout the holiday; some Jews extend this to rice, corn and legumes, though that is a custom and not required.

Matzah:

This unleavened "bread of affliction" is eaten during Passover. It is a reminder that the Israelite slaves left Egypt in such haste that they did not have time to wait for their bread to rise. Many grocery stores will have a Passover version of matzah on sale at this time of year.

Seder:

The ritualistic meal at the heart of Passover. It is a multi-sensory experience that includes a recounting of the Exodus through stories, songs, blessings, foods, dramatizations and discussions.



Haggadah:

The text used at the seder to tell the story of the Exodus.

Conversation:

Passover is a good opportunity to discuss the themes of oppression and bondage, how they apply in modern times and how they might be eradicated.

Shulkhan Oreikh:

The festive meal eaten during the seder, which is a time to give thanks for

Elijah:

blessings.

This Biblical prophet has a symbolic presence at the seder. It's traditional to pour a cup of wine into the "Cup of Elijah" and open the front door to allow Elijah to enter. His presence symbolizes the hope and faith that one day all people will live in peace.

Seder Plate:

This plate contains the symbolic foods used during the seder meal

- Karpas – Greens symbolizing the freshness of spring. These are dipped in saltwater, which symbolizes the tears of slavery.
- Kharoset – A sweet condiment, often made from apples, wine, nuts and cinnamon, symbolizing the mortar used by slaves.
- Beitza – A roasted egg symbolizing renewal, spring and the offering historically made during this season at the time of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.
- Maror – Bitter herbs, usually horseradish, symbolizing the bitterness of slavery.
- Zeraa – A roasted bone symbolizing the sacrificial Passover lamb and God's outstretched arm, which led the Jews out of slavery in Egypt.
- Khazeret – A second bitter herb, usually greens such as romaine lettuce or parsley. Some people omit this item or use the same food as for maror.

Additional Resources and Ideas

Creating Lively Passover Seders: A Sourcebook of Engaging Tales, Texts & Activities by David Arnow:

A Haggadah companion that offers discussion topics, text study ideas, activities and readings

**1001 Questions and Answers on Pesach by Jeffrey M. Cohen:
Comprehensive information on Passover tradition and rituals**

Let My People Go! by Tilda Balsley:

A rhyming story that describes the Ten Plagues and the Exodus. The story is in script format and can be performed as a play

Only Nine Chairs by Deborah Uchill Miller:

a fun story about handling 19 guests at a seder when you only have nine chairs

Still have questions?

For more information about Shabbat, interfaith events and programs around Atlanta, and the JFGA's Interfaith Connector, contact Doug Konkel at dkonkel@jewishatlanta.org

