

# What is Passover?

April 12 - 20, 2025 (First Seder on Saturday evening April 12) · Nissan 14 - 22, 5785

We celebrate Passover (*Pesach* in Hebrew) to commemorate the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt over 3,000 years ago. After 400 years of slavery, the Israelites were led to freedom by Moses, whom God sent to save them. Through Moses, God brought ten plagues upon Egypt in order to convince the pharaoh to let the slaves go.

The name of the holiday refers to the tenth plague: the slaying of the firstborn child of every Egyptian family. Moses instructed the Israelites to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb, so that the plague would “pass over” their houses. The Hebrew word “*pesach*” means to exempt or to spare.

*Pesach* is one of the three most important Jewish holidays, called the Pilgrimage Festivals. After the Israelites settled in the Land of Israel, they made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem every *Shavuot* (in the summer), *Sukkot* (in the fall), and *Pesach* in the spring, bringing offerings from their harvests to the priests in the Temple.

During the eight days of Passover, we are prohibited from eating, or even possessing, any *chametz* food containing grain products (wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye) which has been allowed to ferment and rise.



## By the Numbers

**4** Sons

**4** Questions

**4** Cups of Wine

**3** Matzot on the Seder Plate

**10** Plagues

**40** Years wandering in the desert

**1** Cup for Elijah

Passover begins with a ritual meal called a *seder*, which means “order.” The *hagada*, which means “telling”, guides participants through the 15 steps of the *seder* and explains the symbolic foods:

- a roasted shankbone representing the lamb sacrificed before leaving Egypt
- *maror*, bitter herbs, representing slavery
- parsley, representing spring
- *charoset*, representing the mortar used to make the bricks
- a roasted egg, representing the offering brought to the Temple
- *matza*, the bread that didn't have time to rise when the Israelites hurried to leave Egypt.



## חג פסח שמח



Blood



Frogs



Lice



Flies



Beasts



Boils



Hail



Locusts



Darkness



Death of first born



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