

What Is Passover?

Passover is a seven-day Jewish festival that commemorates the release of the Hebrew people from slavery in the land of Egypt. Passover is celebrated today by having a special dinner called a seder. At the seder the Passover story is read in a special order from a book called a haggadah. Haggadah means "to tell," and it recounts the story of the Hebrew people's journey to freedom.

During the seder traditional and symbolic foods are eaten to remember the Jewish people and their adversity. The Seder plate is the central focus of the Passover table. It contains:

Charoset A mixture of chopped apples, nuts and sweet wine, to represent the mortar used to assemble Egyptian stonehouses.

Karpas A green vegetable or herb (such as parsley) for spring. It is often dipped in salt water to symbolize tears.

Beitzah A roasted hard-boiled egg, representing the cycle of life and the temple sacrifice.

Zeroah A roasted lamb or veal shankbone commemorating the ancient Passover sacrifice.

Mar'or A bitter herb (like horseradish) representing the bitterness of slavery.

Chazeret A second bitter herb, such as lettuce, occasionally fills the sixth place on the Seder plate.

Three pieces of Matzoh Unleavened bread, covered or wrapped in cloth to be used at certain points in the Seder.

