

Passover



Passover is arguably the most widely celebrated of all Jewish holidays. Passover recalls the time of the Hebrew slaves' exodus from Egypt. It is simultaneously the celebration of freedom *from* slavery and freedom *to* become a people with a shared purpose. According to tradition, everyone should see themselves as someone who personally went out of Egypt. The Passover Seder, the festive meal, is structured like a story and filled with sensory experiences to make history come alive.

Passover has several names: *Pesach*, which means to pass over; *z'man cheiruteinu*, the time of our freedom; *chag hamatzot*, the holiday of matzah; and *chag he'aviv*, the holiday of spring. The name *chag he'aviv* describes the time of year in which Passover occurs and hints at some of the underlying themes of the holiday. Like spring, Passover marks a time of renewal and new beginnings.

Passover is customarily a time for spring cleaning. The Torah instructs, "For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses" (Exodus 12:19). Many families spend the days before Passover removing *chametz* from their homes.

Chametz, a Hebrew word derived from the verb "to sour or ferment," refers to any food made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt, or their derivatives that has come in contact with moisture and has been allowed to leaven or rise. Removing *chametz* is both the physical act of sweeping away bread crumbs, as well as a spiritual practice of getting rid of over inflated egos and pride.



Matzah vs. chametz

Help children learn about *chametz*. Bake challah on one day and matzah on the next; serve the challah and matzah together at snack time. Ask the children to compare and contrast the taste, texture, appearance and process by which the two foods were made.



Hide-and-seek chametz

Searching for *chametz* with a candle and feather the night before Passover is a fun holiday tradition. Why wait? Hide crackers (real or paper) around the room. Arm the children with cleaning supplies and send them on a search and scrub mission.

Sensory tables

Experiment with the textures and smells of Passover. Feel the matzah, smell (mild) horseradish and herbs, taste salt water, etc.

Put it in order

Seder means order, and the steps of the festive meal are always the same. You can make cards that signify the Kiddush cup, washing hands, etc., and challenge children to guess the order. Try creating story cards to tell and sequence the Passover story.

Signs of spring

Take a nature walk and look for new growth, budding trees, and signs that animals are nesting.