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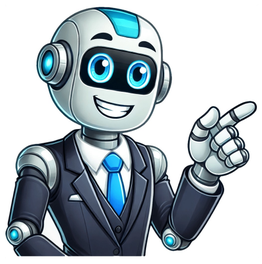

Jewish holiday This article is about the Jewish holiday. For other uses, see Passover (disambiguation). PassoverמַצָּהA table set up for a Passover SederOfficial namePesach – Hebrew: פסח, romanized: PesaḥTypeJewish (religious and cultural)SignificanceCelebrates the Exodus, the freedom from slavery of the Israelites from Ancient Egypt that followed the Ten PlaguesBeginning of the 49 days of Counting of the OmerConnected to barley harvest in springCelebrationsPassover SederBegins15 NisanEnds21 Nisan (22 Nisan in traditional Diaspora communities)Date15 Nisan, 16 Nisan, 17 Nisan, 18 Nisan, 19 Nisan, 20 Nisan, 21 Nisan, 22 Nisan2024 dateSunset, 22 April –nightfall, 30 April (8 days)2025 dateSunset, 12 April –nightfall, 20 April (8 days)2026 dateSunset, 1 April –nightfall, 9 April (8 days)2027 dateSunset, 21 April –nightfall, 29 April (8 days)Related toShavuot ("Festival of Weeks") which follows 49 days from the second night of Passover. Passover, also called Pesach (/ˈpɛsɑːx, ˈpeɪ-/;[1] Biblical Hebrew: חַג הַפֶּסַח, romanized: Ḥag hapPesaḥ, lit. 'Pilgrimage of the Passing Over'), is a major Jewish holiday and one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals. It celebrates the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.[2] According to the Book of Exodus, God commanded Moses to tell the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and mark their doorframes with its blood, in addition to instructions for consuming the lamb that night. For that night, God would send the Angel of Death to bring about the tenth plague, in which he would smite all the firstborn in Egypt. But when the angel saw the blood on the Israelites' doorframes, he would pass over their homes so that the plague should not enter (hence the name). The story is part of the broader Exodus narrative, in which the Israelites, while living in Egypt, are enslaved en masse by the Pharaoh to suppress them; when Pharaoh refuses God's demand to let them go, God sends ten plagues upon Egypt. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh permits the Israelites to leave.[3] Scholars widely believe that the origins of Passover predate the biblical Exodus, with theories suggesting it evolved from earlier semi-nomadic or pre-Israelite rituals and was later transformed through religious and cultic traditions.[4] This story is recounted at the Passover Seder by reading the Haggadah. The Haggadah is a standardized ritual account of the Exodus story, in fulfillment of the command "And thou shalt tell [Higgadata] thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt."[5] Jews are forbidden from possessing or eating leavened foods (chametz) during the holiday. Pesach starts on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which is considered the first month of the Hebrew year. The Rabbinical Jewish calendar is adjusted to align with the solar calendar in such a way that 15 Nisan always coincides with Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. The Hebrew day starts and ends at sunset, so the holiday starts at sunset the day before. For example, in 2025, 15 Nisan coincides with Sunday, April 13. Therefore, Pesach started at sundown on Saturday, April 12, 2025. Part of a series onJews and Judaism Etymology Who is a Jew? Jewish studies Religion God in Judaism (names) Principles of faith Mitzvot (613) Halakha Shabbat Holidays Prayer Tzedakah Land of Israel Brit Bar and bat mitzvah Marriage Bereavement Baal teshuva Philosophy Ethics Kabbalah Messiah Claimants Customs Rites Synagogue Rabbi Texts Tanakh Torah Nevi'im Ketuvim Talmud Mishnah Gemara Rabbinic Midrash Tosefta Targum Beit Yosef Mishneh Torah Tur Shulchan Aruch Zohar History General Timeline Land of Israel Name "Judea" Antisemitism Anti-Judaism Persecution Leaders Modern historiography Historical population comparisons Ancient Israel Twelve Tribes of Israel Kingdom of Judah Kingdom of Israel Jerusalem (in Judaism timeline) Temple in Jerusalem (First Second) Assyrian captivity Babylonian captivity Second Temple period Yehud Medinata Maccabean Revolt Hasmonean dynasty Sanhedrin Schisms (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Sicarii) Second Temple Judaism (Hellenistic Judaism) Jewish–Roman wars (Great Revolt, Diaspora, Bar Kokhba) Rabbinic period and Middle Ages Rabbinic Judaism History of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire Christianity and Judaism (Jews and Christmas) Hinduism and Judaism Islamic–Jewish relations Middle Ages Golden Age Expulsion from Spain Modern era Haskalah Sabbateans Hasidism Jewish atheism Emancipation Old Yishuv Zionism Soviet Union The Holocaust Israel Arab–Israeli conflict Communities Ashkenazim Galician Litvak Mizrahim Sephardim Teimanim Beta Israel Gruzinim Juhurim Bukharim Italkim Romanyotim Cochinim Bene Israel Berber Crimean Karaites Krymchaks Kaifeng Jews Related groups Bnei Anusim Lemba Igbo Jews Samaritans Crypto-Jews Anusim Dönmeh Marranos Neofiti Xueta Mosaic Arabs Subbotniks Noahides Population Judaism by country Lists of Jews Diaspora Historical population by country Population by city Genetic studies Israel and Palestine Old Yishuv New Yishuv Israeli Jews Palestinian Jews Africa Algeria Angola Bilad-el-Sudan Botswana Cameroon Cape Verde Benin Democratic Republic of the Congo Djibouti Egypt Ethiopia Beta Israel Eritrea Eswatini Gabon Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Ivory Coast Kenya Libya Madagascar Malawi Mali Mauritius Morocco Mozambique Namibia Nigeria (Igbo) Republic of the Congo São Tomé and Príncipe Sierra Leone Somalia South Africa Sudan Tanzania Tunisia Uganda (Abayudaya) Zambia Zimbabwe Asia Afghanistan Bahrain Cambodia China Hong Kong India Indonesia Iran Iraq Israel Japan Jordan Kazakhstan Kurdistan Kuwait Kyrgyzstan Lebanon Malaysia Mongolia Myanmar Nepal Oman Pakistan Philippines Qatar Saudi Arabia South Korea Singapore Sri Lanka Syria Tajikistan Taiwan Thailand Turkey United Arab Emirates Uzbekistan Vietnam Yemen Europe Albania Armenia Austria Azerbaijan Belarus Belgium Bosnia Bulgaria Croatia Cyprus Czechia Denmark Estonia Finland France Georgia Germany Greece Romaniote Hungary Iceland Ireland Italy Italkim Latvia Liechtenstein Lithuania Luxembourg Moldova Montenegro Netherlands North Macedonia Norway Poland Portugal Romania Russia Soviet Union Serbia Slovakia Slovenia Spain Sephardim Sweden Switzerland Ukraine United Kingdom England Scotland Wales Northern America Canada United States Greenland Latin America and Caribbean Argentina Bolivia Brazil Chile Colombia Costa Rica Cuba Dominican Republic Ecuador El Salvador Guatemala Guyana Haiti Honduras Jamaica Mexico Nicaragua Panama Paraguay Peru Puerto Rico Suriname Uruguay Venezuela Oceania Australia Fiji Guam New Zealand Palau Denominations Orthodox Modern Haredi Hasidic Reform Conservative Karaite Reconstructionist Renewal Science Haymanot Humanistic Culture Customs Minyan Wedding Clothing Niddah Pidyon haben Kashrut Shidduch Zeved habat Conversion to Judaism Aliyah Hiloni Music Religious Secular Art Ancient Yiddish theatre Dance Humour Cuisine American Ashkenazi Bukharan Ethiopian Israeli Israelite Mizrahi Sephardic Literature Israeli Yiddish Judeo-Tat American Languages Hebrew Biblical Mishnaic Medieval Modern Bukharian Ghardaïa Sign Jewish Koine Greek Judeo-Arabic Judeo-Aramaic Judeo-Berber Judeo-Gascon Judaeo-Georgian Judaeo-Iranian Judeo-Italian Judeo-Malayalam Judaeo-Spanish Judeo-Tat Knaanic Shassi Yeshivish Yevanic Yiddish Zarphatic Politics Jewish political movements Autonomism Bundism Feminism Leftism Secularism Territorialism World Agudath Israel Zionism General Green Labor Kahanism Maximalism Neo-Zionism Religious Revisionist Post-Zionism Category Portalvte Biblical Hebrew: פָּסַח is first mentioned in the Torah's account of the Exodus,[6] and there is some debate about its exact meaning. The commonly held assumption that it means "He passed over" (פסח), in reference to God "passing over" (or "skipping") the houses of the Hebrews during the final of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, stems from the translation provided in the Septuagint (Ancient Greek: παρελεύσεται, romanized: pareleusetai in Exodus 12:23,[6] and ἐσκέπασεν, eskepasen in Exodus 12:27.)[3] The Targum Onkelos, written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, translates pesach as Hebrew: פּוּחָא, romanized: wəyēḥos, lit. 'he had pity', coming from the Hebrew root חוס, meaning "to have pity".[7] Cognate languages yield similar terms with distinct meanings, such as "make soft, soothe, placate" (Akkadian passahu), "harvest, commemoration, blow" (Egyptian), or "separate" (Arabic fsh).[8] Pesach may also refer to the lamb or goat which was designated as the Passover sacrifice. Four days before the Exodus, the Hebrews were commanded to set aside a lamb,[9] and inspect it daily for blemishes. During the day on 14th Nisan, they were to slaughter the animal and use its blood to mark their lintels and door posts. Before midnight on 15th Nisan, they were to consume the lamb. The English term Passover is first known to be recorded in the English language in William Tyndale's translation of the Bible,[10] later appearing in the King James Version as well. It is a literal translation of the Hebrew term.[11] In the King James Version, Exodus 12:23 reads: For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.[12] Illustration of the Exodus from Egypt, 1907 The Passover ritual is "a mitzvah commanded by Torah (rather than of rabbinic origin)."[13] The Passover ritual is thought by modern scholars to have its origins in an apotropaic rite unrelated to the Exodus to ensure the protection of a family home, a rite conducted wholly within a clan.[14] Ezov was employed to daub the blood of a slaughtered sheep on the lintels and door posts to ensure that demonic forces could not enter the home.[15] A further hypothesis maintains that once the Priestly Code was promulgated, the Exodus narrative took on a central function, as the apotropaic rite was, arguably, amalgamated with the Canaanite agricultural festival of spring which was a ceremony of unleavened bread, connected with the barley harvest. As the Exodus motif grew, the original function and symbolism of these double origins was lost.[16] Several motifs replicate the features associated with the Akitu spring festival of ancient Mesopotamian religion, which celebrates the sowing of barley.[17] Scholars John Van Seters, Judah Segal, and Tamara Prošić disagree with the merged two-festivals hypothesis.[18] Further information: Plagues of Egypt In the Book of Exodus, the Israelites are enslaved in ancient Egypt. Yahweh, the god of the Israelites, appears to Moses in a burning bush and commands Moses to confront the Pharaoh. To show his power, Yahweh inflicts a series of ten plagues on the Egyptians, culminating in the plague of the death of the firstborn. Moses said, "Thus says יהוה: Toward midnight I will go forth among the Egyptians, and every [male] first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; and all the first-born of the cattle. And there shall be a loud cry in all the land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again;—Exodus 11:4–6 Before this final plague, Yahweh commands Moses to tell the Israelites to mark a lamb's blood above their doors so God will pass over them and the plague of the death of the firstborn will not afflict them. The biblical regulations for the observance of the festival require that all leavening be disposed of before the beginning of the 15th of Nisan according to Exodus 13:7 An unblemished lamb or goat, known as the Passover sacrifice or "Paschal Lamb", is to be set apart on 10th Nisan,[9] and slaughtered at dusk as 14th Nisan ends in preparation for the 15th of Nisan when it will be eaten after being roasted.[19] The literal meaning of the Hebrew is "between the two evenings".[20] It is then to be eaten "that night", 15th Nisan,[21] roasted, without the removal of its internal organs[22] with unleavened bread, known as matzah, and bitter herbs known as maror.[21] Nothing of the sacrifice on which the sun rises by the morning of the 15th of Nisan may be eaten, but must be burned.[23] The biblical regulations of the original Passover at the time of the Exodus only also include how the meal was to be eaten: "your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is a passover offering to 24]".יהוה The biblical requirements of slaying the Paschal lamb in the individual homes of the Hebrews and smearing the blood of the lamb on their doorways were celebrated in Egypt. However, once Israel was in the wilderness and the Tabernacle was in operation, a change was made in those two original requirements.[25] Passover lambs were to be sacrificed at the door of the Tabernacle and no longer in the homes of the Jews. No longer, therefore, could blood be smeared on doorways. Called the "festival [of] the unleavened bread" (Biblical Hebrew: חג המצות, romanized: ḥag ham-maṣoṯ) in the Hebrew Bible, the commandment to keep Passover is recorded in the Book of Leviticus: In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at dusk is the LORD's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD; seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work. And ye shall bring an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days; in the seventh day is a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work.—Leviticus 23:5–8 (JPS 1917 Version) The sacrifices may be performed only in a specific place prescribed by God. For Judaism, this is Jerusalem.[26] The biblical commandments concerning the Passover (and the Feast of Unleavened Bread) stress the importance of remembering: Exodus 12:14 commands about God's sparing of the firstborn from the Tenth Plague: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."[27] Exodus 13:3 repeats the command to remember: "Remember this day, in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength the hand of the LORD brought you out from this place."[28] Deuteronomy 16:12: "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe and do these statutes".[29] In 2 Kings 23:21–23 and 2 Chronicles 35:1–19, King Josiah of Judah restores the celebration of the Passover,[30] to a standard not seen since the days of the judges or the days of the prophet Samuel.[31] Ezra 6:19–21 records the celebration of the passover by the Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon, after the temple had been rebuilt.[32] Some of these details can be corroborated, and to some extent amplified, in extrabiblical sources. The removal (or "sealing up") of the leaven is referred to in the Elephantine papyri and ostraca in an Imperial Aramaic papyrus letter from the 5th century BCE from Elephantine, Egypt.[33] The slaughter of the lambs on the 14th is mentioned in Jubilees, a Jewish work of the Ptolemaic period, and by the Herodian-era writers Josephus and Philo. These sources also indicate that "between the two evenings" was taken to mean the afternoon.[34] Jubilees states the sacrifice was eaten that night,[35] and together with Josephus states that nothing of the sacrifice was allowed to remain until morning.[36] Philo states that the banquet included hymns and prayers.[37] See also: Hebrew calendar and Yom tov sheni shel galuyot The Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan, which at present falls between March 26 and April 25 of the Gregorian calendar.[38] The 15th day begins in the evening, after the 14th day, and the seder meal is eaten that evening. Passover is a spring festival, so the 15th day of Nisan typically begins on the night of a full moon after the northern vernal equinox.[39] However, due to leap months falling after the vernal equinox, Passover sometimes starts on the second full moon after vernal equinox, as in 2016. To ensure that Passover did not start before spring, the tradition in ancient Israel held that the lunar new year, the first day of Nisan, would not start until the barley was ripe, being the test for the onset of spring.[40] If the barley was not ripe, or various other phenomena[41] indicated that spring was not yet imminent, an intercalary month (Adar II) would be added. However, since at least the 4th century, the intercalation has been fixed mathematically according to the Metonic cycle.[42] In Israel, Passover is the seven-day holiday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with the first and last days celebrated as legal holidays and as holy days involving holiday meals, special prayer services, and abstention from work; the intervening days are known as Chol HaMoed ("Weekdays [of] the Festival"). Jews outside of Israel celebrate the festival for eight days. Reform and Reconstructionist Jews usually celebrate the holiday over seven days.[43][44][45] Karaites use a different calendar; they rely on visual identification of ripe barley and the date of Passover cannot be determined before this.[46] Some modern Karaites follow the Rabbinical calendar in modern Israel because of social pressure.[47] The Samaritans use a calendrical system that uses a different method from that current in Rabbinic practice; it sometimes is the same date on the solar calendar, sometimes two days later, and sometimes an entire month later.[48] In 2024, Rabbinical Passover begins at sunset on 22 April. On the calendar used by the Samaritans, 22 April 2024 is also the day of the Passover sacrifice. Karaite and Samaritan Passovers are each one day long followed by the six-day Festival of Unleavened Bread, for a total of seven days.[49] See also: Chametz § Removal of chametz, and Bedikat Chametz Washing dishes for passover (1657) Burning chametz on the morning before Passover begins Leaven, in Hebrew chametz (Hebrew: חמץ ḥamets, "leavening") is made from one of five types of grains[50] combined with water and left to stand for more than eighteen minutes. The consumption, keeping, and owning of chametz is forbidden during Passover. Yeast and fermentation are not themselves forbidden as seen for example by wine, which is required, rather than merely permitted. According to Halakha, the ownership of such chametz is also proscribed.[51] Chametz does not include baking soda, baking powder or like products. Although these are defined in English as leavening agents, they leaven by chemical reaction, not by biological fermentation. Thus, bagels, waffles and pancakes made with baking soda and matzah meal are considered permissible, while bagels made with sourdough and pancakes and waffles made with yeast are prohibited.[52] The Torah commandments regarding chametz are: To remove all chametz from one's home, including things made with chametz, before the first day of Passover[53] It may be simply used up, thrown out (historically, destroyed by burning), or given or sold to non-Jews. To refrain from eating chametz or mixtures containing chametz during Passover.[54] Not to possess chametz in one's domain (i.e. home, office, car, etc.) during Passover.[55] Observant Jews spend the weeks before Passover in the process of thorough housecleaning, to remove all chametz from every part of the home. Jewish law requires the elimination of olive-sized or larger quantities of leavening from one's possession, but most housekeeping goes beyond this. Even the seams of kitchen counters are thoroughly cleaned to remove traces of flour and yeast, however small. Any containers or implements that have touched chametz are stored and not used during Passover.[56] Some hotels, resorts, and even cruise ships across America, Europe, and Israel also undergo a thorough housecleaning to make their premises "kosher for Pesach" to cater to observant Jews.[57] Some scholars suggest that the command to abstain from leavened food or yeast suggests that sacrifices offered to God involve the offering of objects in "their least altered state", that would be nearest to the way in which they were initially made by God.[58][59] According to other scholars the absence of leaven or yeast means that leaven or yeast symbolizes corruption and spoiling.[58][60] There are also variations with restrictions on eating matzah before Passover so that there will be an increased appetite for it during Passover itself. Primarily among Chabad Chassidim, there is a custom of not eating matzah (flat unleavened bread) in the 30 days before Passover begins.[61] Others have a custom to refrain from eating matzah from Rosh Chodesh Nissan, while the halacha merely restricts one from eating matzah on the day before Passover.[62] Kitniyot (Hebrew: קִטְנִיּוֹת, qitniyyot; literally "small things") refers to legumes, rice, maize, and other foods that are similar to grains. Ashkenazi Jews historically refrain from eating kitniyot on Passover, despite there not being a clear commandment to include them in the category of chametz.[63] Since the 19th century, the Reform movement has permitted eating kitniyot, and in 2015 the Conservative movement followed suit.[64] Sephardi Jews have always permitted eating kitniyot on Passover. Gebrochts (Yiddish: געברא̈קטס, lit. 'broken', also known as Hebrew: מצה שרויה, romanized: matzah shruya, lit. 'soaked matzah') refers to matzah that has absorbed liquid. Some Hasidic Jews avoid gebrochts as well, to avoid the possibility that a clump of flour that was never properly mixed with water (and thus is still susceptible to leavening) may come into contact with the liquid.[65] The former President of Israel Reuven Rivlin sells the leaven of the Beit HaNassi (the official residence of the president), to Shlomo Amar, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel and the Rishon LeZion, in order that Amar will later sell it to a non-Jew. See also: Chametz § Sale of chametz Chametz foods blocked from purchase during Passover in a Jerusalem supermarket Leaven or chametz may be sold rather than discarded, especially in the case of relatively valuable forms such as liquor distilled from wheat, with the products being repurchased afterward. In some cases, they may never leave the house, instead being formally sold while remaining in the original owner's possession in a locked cabinet until they can be repurchased after the holiday. Modern observance may also include sealing cabinets and drawers which contain "Chametz" shut by using adhesive tape, which serves a similar purpose to a lock but also shows evidence of tampering. Although the practice of selling "Chametz" dates back many years, some Reform rabbinical authorities have come to regard it with disdain – since the supposed "new owner" never takes actual possession of the goods.[66] The sale of chametz may also be conducted communally via a rabbi, who becomes the "agent" for all the community's Jews through a halakhic procedure called a kinyan (acquisition). Each householder must put aside all the chametz he is selling into a box or cupboard, and the rabbi enters into a contract to sell all the chametz to a non-Jew (who is not obligated to celebrate the commandments) in exchange for a small down payment (e.g. $1.00), with the remainder due after Passover. This sale is considered completely binding according to Halakha, and at any time during the holiday, the buyer may come to take or partake of his property. The rabbi then re-purchases the goods for less than they were sold at the end of the holiday.[67] Passover glass, interwar period Poland Due to the Torah injunction not to eat chametz (leaven) during Passover,[53] observant families typically own complete sets of serving dishes, glassware and silverware (and in some cases, even separate dishwashers and sinks) which have never come into contact with chametz, for use only during Passover. Under certain circumstances, some chametz utensils can be immersed in boiling water (hagalat keilim) to purge them of any traces of chametz that may have accumulated during the year. Many Sephardic families thoroughly wash their year-round glassware and then use it for Passover, as the Sephardic position is that glass does not absorb enough traces of food to present a problem. Similarly, ovens may be used for Passover either by setting the self-cleaning function to the highest degree for a certain period, or by applying a blow torch to the interior until the oven glows red hot (a process called libun gamur).[68] Main article: bedikat chametz Wikisource has original text related to this article: Talmud's introduction to checking for chametz and defining or (literally, "light") (Tractate Pesachim 2a) On the night of the fourteenth of Nisan, the night before the Passover Seder (after nightfall on the evening before Passover eve), Jews do a formal search in their homes known as bedikat chametz for any possible remaining leaven (chametz). The Talmudic sages instructed that a search for chametz be made in every home, place of work, or any place where chametz may have been brought during the year.[69] When the first Seder is on a Saturday night, the search is conducted on the preceding Thursday night (thirteenth of Nisan) as chametz cannot be burned during Shabbat. The Talmud in Pesahim (p. 2a) derives from the Torah that the search for chametz be conducted by the light of a candle and therefore is done at night, and although the final destruction of the chametz (usually by burning it in a small bonfire) is done on the next morning, the blessing is made at night because the search is both in preparation for and part of the commandments to remove and destroy all chametz from one's possession.[69] Before the search is begun there is a special blessing. If several people or family members assist in the search then only one person, usually the head of that family recites the blessing having in mind to include everyone present:[69] Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with his commandments and has commanded us concerning the removal of chametz. Hebrew: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְ-הוה א-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בִּעוּר חָמֵץ, romanized: bāruḵ attā ḏonāy Elohēnu meleḵ hāʿolām ʿăšer qiddəšānu bəmiṣwāṯāw wəṣiwānu ʿal bəʿor ḥāmeṣ The search is then usually conducted by the head of the household joined by his family including children under the supervision of their parents. It is customary to turn off the lights and conduct the search by candlelight, using a feather and a wooden spoon: candlelight effectively illuminates corners without casting shadows; the feather can dust crumbs out of their hiding places; and the wooden spoon which collects the crumbs can be burned the next day with the hametz. However, most contemporary Orthodox authorities permit using a flashlight, while some strongly encourage it due to the danger coupled with using a candle. Because the house is assumed to have been thoroughly cleaned by the night before Passover, there is some concern that making a blessing over the search for hametz will be in vain (bracha l'vatala) if nothing is found. Thus, 10 morsels of bread or cereal smaller than the size of an olive are traditionally hidden throughout the house to ensure that some 'hametz will be found. Upon conclusion of the search, with all the small pieces safely wrapped up and put in one bag or place, to be burned the next morning, the following is said: Any chametz or leaven that is in my possession which I have not seen and have not removed and do not know about should be annulled and become ownerless like the dust of the earth.[69] Note that if the 14th of Nisan is Shabbat, many of the below will be celebrated on the 13th instead due to restrictions in place during Shabbat. Main articles: Fast of the Firstborn and siyum On the day preceding the first Passover seder (or on Thursday morning preceding the seder, when the first seder falls on Motza'ei Shabbat), firstborn sons are commanded to celebrate the Fast of the Firstborn which commemorates the salvation of the Hebrew firstborns. According to Exodus 12:29, God struck down all Egyptian firstborns while the Israelites were not affected.[70] However, it is customary for synagogues to conduct a siyum (ceremony marking the completion of a section of Torah learning) right after morning prayers, and the celebratory meal that follows cancels the firstborn's obligation to fast. On the morning of the 14th of Nisan, any leavened products that remain in the householder's possession, along with the 10 morsels of bread from the previous night's search, are burned (s'rayfat chametz). The head of the household repeats the declaration of biyur chametz, declaring any chametz that may not have been found to be null and void "as the dust of the earth": Any chametz or leaven that is in my possession which I have not seen and have not removed and do not know about should be annulled and become ownerless like the dust of the earth. The original declaration, as recited in Aramaic, is:[69] כל חמירא וחמיעא דאכא ברשותי דלא חמתה ודלא בערתה ודלא ידענא לה לבטל ולהוי הפקר כעפרא דארעא Should more chametz actually be found in the house during the Passover holiday, it must be burnt as soon as possible. Unlike chametz, which can be eaten any day of the year except during Passover, kosher for Passover foods can be eaten year-round. They need not be burnt or otherwise discarded after the holiday ends. The historic Passover sacrifice has not been brought following the Romans' destruction of the Second Temple approximately two thousand years ago, and it is therefore still not part of the modern Jewish holiday. In the times when the Jewish Temples stood, the lamb was slaughtered and cooked on the evening of Passover and was completely consumed before the morning as described in Exodus 12:3–11.[71] Even matzot that are kosher for Passover cannot be eaten all day on during the daylight hours before Passover eve.[72] Some even practice this up to 30 days before.[73] Main article: Passover sacrifice The main entity in Passover according to Judaism is the sacrificial lamb.[58] During the existence of the Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem, the focus of the Passover festival was the Passover sacrifice, also known as the Paschal lamb, eaten during the Passover Seder on the 15th of Nisan. Every family large enough to completely consume a young lamb or wild goat was required to offer one for sacrifice at the Jewish Temple on the afternoon of the 14th day of Nisan,[74] and eat it that night, which was the 15th of Nisan.[75] If the family was too small to finish eating the entire offering in one sitting, an offering was made for a group of families. The sacrifice could not be offered with anything leavened,[76] and had to be roasted, without its head, feet, or inner organs being removed[77] and eaten together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (maror). One had to be careful not to break any bones from the offering,[78] and none of the meat could be left over by morning.[79] Because of the Passover sacrifice's status as a sacred offering, the only people allowed to eat it were those who had the obligation to bring the offering. Among those who could not offer or eat the Passover lamb were an apostate,[80] a servant,[81] an uncircumcised man,[82] a person in a state of ritual impurity except when a majority of Jews are in such a state,[83] and a Gentile. The offering had to be made before a quorum of 30.[84] In the Temple, the Levites sang Hallel while the priests performed the sacrificial service. Men and women were equally obligated regarding the offering (Pesahim 91b). Today, in the absence of the Temple, when no sacrifices are offered or eaten, the mitzvah of the sacrifice is memorialized in the Seder Korban Pesach, a set of scriptural and Rabbinic passages dealing with the Passover sacrifice, customarily recited after the Mincha (afternoon prayer) service on the 14th of Nisan,[85] and in the form of the zeroa, a symbolic food placed on the Passover Seder Plate (but not eaten), which is usually a roasted shankbone (or a chicken wing or neck). The eating of the afikoman substitutes for the eating of the sacrifice at the end of the Seder meal (Mishnah Pesachim 119a). Many Sephardic Jews have the custom of eating lamb or goat meat during the Seder in memory of the sacrifice. Main article: Matzah Machine-made shmura matza A symbol of the Passover holiday is matzah, an unleavened flatbread made solely from flour and water which is continually worked from mixing through baking, so that it is not allowed to rise. Matzo may be made by machine or by hand. The Torah contains an instruction to eat matzah, specifically, on the first night of Passover and to eat only unleavened bread (in practice, matzah) during the entire week of Passover.[86] Consequently, the eating of matzah figures prominently in the Passover Seder. There are several explanations for this. The Torah says that it is because the Hebrews left Egypt with such haste that there was no time to allow baked bread to rise; thus flat, unleavened bread, matzah, is a reminder of the rapid departure of the Exodus.[87] Other scholars teach that in the time of the Exodus, matzah was commonly baked to travel because it preserved well and was light to carry (making it similar to hardtack), suggesting that matzah was baked intentionally for the long journey ahead. Matzo has also been called Lechem Oni (Hebrew: "bread of poverty"). There is an attendant explanation that matzah serves as a symbol to remind Jews what it is like to be a poor slave and to promote humility, appreciate freedom, and avoid the inflated ego symbolized by more luxurious leavened bread.[88] Hand-made shmura matzah Shmura matzah ("watched" or "guarded" matzah), is the bread of preference for the Passover Seder in Orthodox Jewish communities. Shmura matzah is made from wheat that is guarded from contamination by leaven from the time of summer harvest[50] to its baking into matzot five to ten months later. In the weeks before Passover, matzot are prepared for holiday consumption. In many Orthodox Jewish communities, men traditionally gather in groups to bake handmade matzah for use at the Seder, the dough being rolled by hand, resulting in a large and round matzah. Groups also work together in machine-made matzah factories, which produce the typically square-shaped matzah sold in stores. The baking of matzah is labour-intensive,[50] as less than 18 minutes is permitted between the mixing of flour and water to the conclusion of baking and removal from the oven. Consequently, only a small number of matzot can be baked at one time, and the group members are enjoined to work the dough constantly so that it is not allowed to ferment and rise. A special cutting tool is run over the dough just before baking to prick any bubbles which might make the matza puff up;[89] this creates the familiar dotted holes in the matzah. After the matzot come out of the oven, the entire work area is scrubbed down and swept to make sure that no pieces of old, potentially leavened dough remain, as any stray pieces are now hametz and can contaminate the next batch of matzah. Some machine-made matzot are completed within five minutes of being kneaded.[50] Table set for the Passover Seder Main article: Passover Seder It is traditional for Jewish families to gather on the first night of Passover (first two nights in Orthodox and Conservative communities outside Israel) for a special dinner called a seder (Hebrew: סדר seder – derived from the Hebrew word for "order" or "arrangement", referring to the very specific order of the ritual). The table is set with the finest china and silverware to reflect the importance of the meal. During this meal, the story of the Exodus from Egypt is retold using a special text called the Haggadah. A total of four cups of wine are consumed during the recitation of the Haggadah. The seder is divided by the haggadah into the following 15 parts: Qāḏēš קָדֵשׁ – recital of the Kiddush and drinking of the first cup of wine Urḥaṣ וּרְחַץ lit. "'and wash"' – the washing of the hands – without blessing Karpas כַּרְפַּס – dipping of the karpas in salt water Yaḥaṣ יַחַץ – breaking the middle matzah; the larger piece becomes the afikoman which is eaten later during the ritual of Şafun Maggiḏ מַגִּיד – retelling the Passover story, including the recital of "the four questions" and drinking of the second cup of wine Raḥṣā רַחְצָה – second washing of the hands – with blessing Moṣi מוֹצִיא – traditional blessing before eating bread products Maṣā מַצָּה – blessing before eating matzah Maror מָרוֹר – eating of the maror Korēḵ כּוֹרֵךְ – eating of a sandwich made of matzah and maror Shulḥān ʿorēḵ שֻׁלְחָן עוֹרֵךְ – lit. "set table" – the serving of the holiday meal Şafun צָפוּן – eating of the afikoman Bareiḥ/ Barēkh בָּרֵךְ – blessing after the meal and drinking of the third cup of wine Hallel הַלֵּל – recital of the Hallel, traditionally recited on festivals; drinking of the fourth cup of wine Nirṣā נִרְצָה – conclusion These 15 parts parallel the 15 steps in the Temple in Jerusalem on which the Levites stood during Temple services, and which were memorialized in the 15 Psalms (#120–134) known as Shir HaMa'a lot (Hebrew: שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת shiyr ha-ma'alôth, "Songs of Ascent").[90] The seder is replete with questions, answers, and unusual practices (e.g. the recital of Kiddush which is not immediately followed by the blessing over bread, which is the traditional procedure for all other holiday meals) to arouse the interest and curiosity of the children at the table. The children are also rewarded with nuts and candies when they ask questions and participate in the discussion of the Exodus and its aftermath. Likewise, they are encouraged to search for the afikoman, the piece of matzah which is the last thing eaten at the seder. Audience participation and interaction is the rule, and many families' seders last long into the night with animated discussions and singing. The seder concludes with additional songs of praise and faith printed in the Haggadah, including Chad Gadya ("One Little Kid" or "One Little Goat"). Types of maror: grated horseradish, romaine lettuce, whole horseradish root Maror (bitter herbs) symbolizes the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. The following verse from the Torah underscores that symbolism: "And they embittered (Hebrew: וימררו ve-yimareru) their lives with hard labor, with mortar and with bricks and with all manner of labor in the field; any labor that they made them do was with hard labor" (Exodus 1:14). Silver seder plate There is a Rabbinic requirement that four cups of wine are to be drunk during the seder meal. This applies to both men and women. The Mishnah says (Pes. 10:1) that even the poorest man in Israel must drink. Each cup is connected to a different part of the seder: the first cup is for Kiddush, the second cup is connected with the recounting of the Exodus, the drinking of the third cup concludes Birkat Hamazon and the fourth cup is associated with Hallel. A fifth cup of wine is poured near the end of the seder for the prophet Elijah, a symbol of the future redemption, which is left un-touched.[91] See also: The four questions Children have a very important role in the Passover seder. Traditionally the youngest child is prompted to ask questions about the Passover seder, beginning with the words, Mah Nishtana HaLeila HaZeh (Why is this night different from all other nights?). The questions encourage the gathering to discuss the significance of the symbols in the meal. The questions asked by the child are: Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat either unleavened or leavened bread, but tonight we eat only unleavened bread? On all other nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables, but tonight, we eat only bitter herbs? On all other nights, we do not dip [our food] even once, but tonight we dip twice? On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but tonight we only recline? Often the leader of the seder and the other adults at the meal will use prompted responses from the Haggadah, which states, "The more one talks about the Exodus from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is." Many readings, prayers, and stories are used to recount the story of the Exodus. Many households add their own commentary and interpretation and often the story of the Jews is related to the theme of liberation and its implications worldwide. 14th century Haggadah The afikoman – an integral part of the Seder itself – is used to engage the interest and excitement of the children at the table. During the fourth part of the Seder, called Yachatz, the leader breaks the middle piece of matzah into two. He sets aside the larger portion as the afikoman. Many families use the afikoman as a device for keeping the children awake and alert throughout the Seder proceedings by hiding the afikoman and offering a prize for its return.[50] Alternatively, the children are allowed to "steal" the afikoman and demand a reward for its return. In either case, the afikoman must be consumed during the twelfth part of the Seder, Tzafun. After the Hallel, the fourth glass of wine is drunk, and participants recite a prayer that ends in "Next year in Jerusalem!". This is followed by several lyric prayers that expound upon God's mercy and kindness, and give thanks for the survival of the Jewish people through a history of exile and hardship. "Echad Mi Yodea" ("Who Knows One?") is a playful song, testing the general knowledge of the children (and the adults). Some of these songs, such as "Chad Gadya" are allegorical. During Passover, the recitation of Hallel a collection of Psalms praising and thanking God, is an integral part of the daily prayer service. On the initial day(s) of Passover, it is recited in its entirety, similar to the practice observed on Shavuot and throughout Succot. However, for the subsequent days of the Passover holiday, only half of the Hallel is recited. This traditional practice is widely observed by adherents of the Jewish faith as a way of expressing gratitude and celebrating the significance of Passover, while maintaining variations in the recitation of Hallel based on specific days within the festival.[92][93] Main article: Counting of the Omer Beginning on the second night of Passover, the 16th day of Nisan,[94] Jews begin the practice of the Counting of the Omer, a nightly reminder of the approach of the holiday of Shavuot 50 days hence. Each night after the evening prayer service, men and women recite a special blessing and then enumerate the day of the Omer. On the first night, for example, they say, "Today is the first day in (or, to) the Omer"; on the second night, "Today is the second day in the Omer." The counting also involves weeks; thus, the seventh day is commemorated, "Today is the seventh day, which is one week in the Omer." The eighth day is marked, "Today is the eighth day, which is one week and one day in the Omer," etc.[95] When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, a sheaf of new-cut barley was presented before the altar on the second day of Unleavened