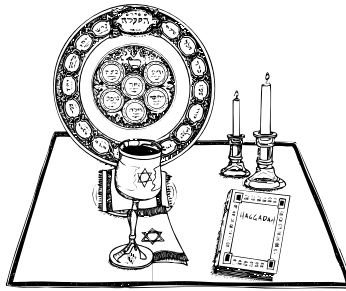


# Pesach

An outline of the Pesach celebrations  
(Edited from a version of the Haggadah)



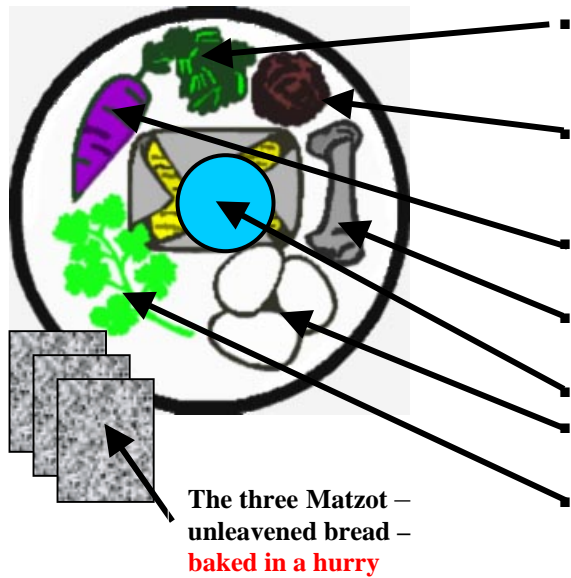
## Introduction

- **What is Pesach?** The Hebrew word as it occurs in the scriptures is derived from a verb meaning “he hovered over, guarding.” The word can also be divided into two words: *peh sach*, which means ‘the mouth speaks’ and refers to the way people tell each other of God’s goodness and faithfulness in the past. It is found in the word for Easter in many languages such as French. The word Passover refers to the passing over from slavery to freedom and the passing of the angel of death over the Hebrew houses smeared with lamb’s blood (e.g. the paschal lamb).
- **What is a Haggadah?** Haggadah means ‘telling’ and refers to the booklet that tells the story of the Exodus from Egypt, and sets out the order of the meal.
- **What is the afikomen?** No one is sure of its original meaning, although it is possibly based on Greek, *epikomen* or *epikomion*, meaning ‘that which comes after.’ Some say it means a dessert or savoury. Others suggest it means hopping or revelling, or ‘the coming one’ or even ‘remove the dishes’. Some Hebrew Christians see the three matzot (sing. matzah) as representing the Trinity and the middle one, the Son, is broken and hidden representing the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. Its reappearance later, after having been hidden, represents the resurrection.

## The search for and removal of chametz (yeast) before Pesach

- **Why do they do this?** The ancient Israelites were told to baked unleavened bread, as they had to leave in hurry. Leaven is also used to refer to sin (e.g. being ‘puffed up’ or arrogant), so it reminds us to clear out the evil and sin in our lives. No chametz must be in the house over Passover.
- **How is it done?** The mother will hide pieces of chametz in the house and the father and children will search for them—often with a candle and feather—and then be rewarded with sweets etc for the pieces found.

## The seder plate



▪ **Chazeret:** A herb (e.g. lettuce) that goes bitter in the mouth **Like lettuce, Pharaoh started sweet but turned bitter**

▪ **Charoset:** chopped apple, nuts and cinnamon mixture [Mention nut allergy] **Symbolises the mud and mortar used in building Pharaoh's cities**

▪ **Maror:** (bitter herbs, e.g. horse-radish) **Life as a slave was bitter**

▪ **Zeroa:** (Roasted shankbone of a lamb) **The Passover lamb - blood put on doorposts**

▪ **Salt Water:** **The tears of the slaves**

▪ **Betzah:** (roasted egg) **Symbolic of the offerings brought to the Temple**

▪ **Karpas:** (a green vegetable) **Symbol of spring - New year, new life of freedom**

## The 15 steps of the Pesach seder

- 1) **Kadesh:** Recite the Kiddush
- 2) **Urechatz:** Washing the hands.
- 3) **Karpas:** Eating of the karpas.
- 4) **Yachatz:** Breaking the middle matzah.
- 5) **Maggid:** Recital of Haggadah.
- 6) **Rachtzah:** Washing the hands (for the matzot).
- 7) **Motzi:** Blessing of Hamotzi (over matzot).
- 8) **Matzot:** Blessing over, and eating of, matzah.

- 9) **Maror:** Blessing over, and eating of, maror.
- 10) **Korech:** Eating combination of matzah and maror.
- 11) **Shulchan Orech:** Set table (festive meal).
- 12) **Tzafun:** Eating the hidden afikoman.
- 13) **Beirach:** Birkat Hamazon (blessing after meal).
- 14) **Hallel:** Recital of psalms of praise.
- 15) **Nirtzah:** The Seder is accepted favourably.

- 1) **Kadesh:** Kiddush (blessing over the first cup). Jews would traditionally recline on their left side as a sign of freedom—only free men not slaves could do that. The first cup of wine (the cup of blessing—particularly the blessing of freedom) is poured and the Kiddush (literally ‘sanctification’, i.e. a blessing) is recited:

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. ... You, G-d, our G-d, have given us in love festivals for happiness, feasts and festive seasons for rejoicing the day of this feast, the season of our freedom commemorating the departure from Egypt.*

- 2) **Urechatz:** Washing the hands.
- 3) **Karpas:** (Eating the green vegetable). Jews thank God for the gift of life. They dip the karpas (parsley) into the salt water and eat.
- 4) **Yachat:** (Breaking the middle matzah). They take the middle matzah and break it into two unequal pieces. The larger piece is set aside to serve as afikoman, and the smaller piece is put back between the other two matzot.
- 5) **Maggid:** (The recital of their history). In the Shema<sup>1</sup> God tells the Jews to pass on the accounts of what he had done for them and the Passover meal is a colourful and much loved way of doing this. It re-enacts through tasting various foods and sharing the story, all that saving acts of God at the time of the Exodus from slavery in Egypt.

The three matzot are raised and the following may be said:

*This is the bread of suffering that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the seder of Pesach. This year here: next year in the land of Israel. This year slaves: next year free people.*

The tray with the matzot is moved aside, and the second cup (the cup of wrath or judgment) is poured.

Now the youngest child asks *Mah Nishtana*<sup>2</sup>:

*What makes this night different from all [other] nights?  
On all nights we need not dip even once, on this night we do so twice!  
And on all nights we eat chametz or matzah, and on this night only matzah.  
On all nights we eat any kind of vegetables, and on this night maror! On all  
nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!*

The tray is restored to its place with the matzot partly uncovered.

*We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the L-rd, our G-d, took us out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm. If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children, would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. In the beginning our fathers served idols; but now the Ever Present One has brought us close to His service...*

*The L-rd heard our voice. He heard our groaning, and remembered His covenant promise with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... The L-rd took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with signs and wonders. The Holy One, blessed be He, did it in His glory by Himself!*

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, 'Hear!' From the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

<sup>2</sup> Literally, "Why is this night different?"

As it is written: “In that night I will pass through the land of Egypt, and I will strike every first-born in the land of Egypt, from man to beast, and I will carry out judgment against all the gods of Egypt.”

The ten plagues are listed and Jews dip one finger into the cup of wine and drip one drop into a saucer for each plague.

*These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows: Blood → Frogs → Lice → Wild Beasts → Pestilence → Boils → Hail → Locust → Darkness → Slaying of the First-born*

*Thus it is our duty to thank, to laud, to praise, to glorify, to exalt, to adore, to bless, to elevate and to honour the One who did all these miracles for our fathers and for us. He took us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to dancing, from deep darkness to great light and from bondage to redemption. Praise G-d!*

*Offer praise, you servants of the L-rd; praise the Name of the L-rd. May the L-rd's Name be blessed from now and to all eternity...He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the dunghill, to seat them with nobles, with the nobles of His people. He restores joy to the barren woman making her the joyful mother of children. Halleluyah—praise G-d.*

*Blessed are You, G-d, our G-d, King of the universe, who has redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt, and enabled us to attain this night to eat matzah and maror.*

They recite the following blessing, and sip the recently poured cup of wine (the cup of wrath or judgement) saying:

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.*

- 6) **Rachtzah** (Washing the hands for the matzot)
- 7) **Motzi** (The blessing over the matzot) The leader takes the matzot in the order that they are lying on the tray—the broken piece between the two whole matzot—and recites the following blessing:

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.*

- 8) **Matzot** (Unleavened bread) The third matzah (the bottom one) is put down, and the following blessing is said over the broken matzah and the top one.

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the eating of matzah.*

A kezayit (piece/portion) from each of the two matzot is broken off, held, and eaten together.

- 9) **Maror** (Bitter herbs) The following is said over the maror:

*This maror that we eat for what reason? Because the Egyptians embittered our fathers' lives in Egypt, as it is said: “They made their lives bitter with hard service, with mortar and with*

*bricks, and with all manner of service in the field; all their service which they made them serve with rigour.”*

They then take a kezayit of the maror, dip it into the charoset—but then shake off the charoset that stuck to it, so that the bitter taste will not be neutralized, and recite the following blessing:

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the eating of maror.*

They then eat the maror.

- 10) **Korech** (Making a sandwich!) They take the third matzah, and also a small piece of the chazeret (water-cress or parsley)—which is to be dipped into charoset, and eat them together.
- 11) **Shulchan Orech** (The festival meal) This is when the feasting would take place!
- 12) **Tzafun** (Means ‘hidden’—eating the afikomen) At this point whoever has stolen the afikomen (usually the children or it may have been hidden for the children to find) brings it to the leader of the seder and bargains for its return. Since the afikomen is needed to complete the seder, the children can usually get a pretty good deal! When the bargaining is over, the leader gives some of the afikomen (which is the first half of the matzah that was divided during Yahatz) to all the participants of the seder, who eat it.
- 13) **Beirach** (Blessing after the meal) Here, Psalm 126 is read. It speaks of how God has restored the fortunes of his people and beseeches God to ‘do it again’.

*The leader will say: I will bless the L-rd at all times; His praise is always in my mouth. The ultimate conclusion, all having been heard: fear G-d and observe His commandments, for this is the whole of man. My mouth will utter the praise of the L-rd, and all flesh shall bless His holy Name forever and ever. And we will bless the L-rd from now and forever; Halleluyah, praise G-d.*

At this point Jews will say ‘grace’ and prayers, thanking G-d for all his covenant goodness in providing food, land, freedom, the Law, etc, and asking for him to remember them and bless them. They recite the blessing for the wine, and drink the third cup (the cup of salvation/redemption) in reclining position:

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.*

The fourth cup (the cup of the kingdom) is poured and the door is opened, to welcome Elijah who will return before the Messiah comes. Here they ask God to pour out his wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge him, because of what they have done to his people.

- 14) **Hallel** (Praise) Here the Jews will recite scriptures and sayings in praise of G-d. Below are some examples from the Tenakh and some prayers of praise:

*Not to us, L-rd, not to us, but to Your Name give glory, for the sake of Your kindness and Your truth. Why should the nations say, “Where, now, is their G-d?” Our G-d is in heaven, whatever He desires, He does.*

*I love the L-rd, because He hears my voice, my prayers. For He turned His ear to me; all my days I will call [upon Him]. The pangs of death encompassed me, and the agonies of the grave came upon me, trouble and sorrow I encounter and I call upon the Name of the L-rd: Please, L-rd, deliver my soul! The L-rd is gracious and just, our G-d is Compassionate.*

*The stone scorned by the builders has become the main cornerstone. This was indeed from the L-rd, it is wondrous in our eyes. Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the L-rd; we bless you from the House of the L-rd.*

*From the beginning to the end of the world You are Almighty G-d; and other than You we have no King, Redeemer and Saviour who delivers, rescues, sustains, answers and is merciful in every time of trouble and distress; we have no King but You.*

*Behold, the L-rd neither slumbers nor sleeps. He arouses the sleepers and awakens the slumberous, gives speech to the mute, releases the bound, supports the falling and raises up those who are bowed. To You alone we give thanks. Even if our mouths were filled with song as the sea, and our tongues with joyous singing like the multitudes of its waves, and our lips with praise like the expanse of the sky; and our eyes shining like the sun and the moon, and our hands spread out like the eagles of heaven, and our feet swift like deer we would still be unable to thank You L-rd, our G-d and G-d of our fathers, and to bless Your Name, for even one of the thousands of millions, and myriads of myriads, of favours, miracles and wonders which You have done for us and for our fathers before us. Amen*

- 15) **Nirtzah** (Drinking the fourth cup and concluding the seder) They say the following blessing over the wine then drink the fourth cup, the cup of the kingdom, in reclining position.

*Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.*

Jews will then give a final blessing for the wine, asking God to show mercy to his people and to remember them on this festival of matzot ('unleavened bread'). Afterwards they say: 'next year in Jerusalem!'