

the Observing Passover Holiday

{ No other ceremony or ritual is as beloved or is more widely observed by so many as the Passover Seder.

...yet celebrating Passover properly requires close familiarity with all the laws governing Passover foods, ownership of *chametz*, preparing the home, and so on.

In this *Guide*, we have provided much of the basic information you will need. However, if you are unsure about any aspect at all of how to observe Passover, or how to make sure your home fully conforms to the Passover requirements, you should not hesitate to ask an Orthodox Rabbi for his guidance.

PASSOVER FAQs

► What is Passover?

Passover is an eight day Jewish holiday, of biblical origin, marking the birth of the Jewish people and their emergence as a unique nation in history, devoted to God's will. It celebrates the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt over 3000 years ago, under the leadership of Moses.

► When Does Passover Begin?

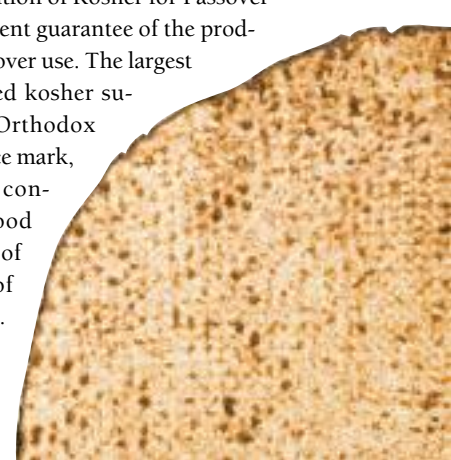
According to biblical law, Passover is determined by the Jewish lunar calendar, and begins on the eve of the fifteenth day of the month of *Nissan*. The English date varies from year to year, falling in March or in April. This year Passover begins Wednesday evening, April 8, 2009.

► What Does Kosher for Passover Mean?

During Passover, Jewish law forbids the consumption or possession by Jews of all edible fermented grain products (*chametz*) or related foods. Therefore, even foods and household products which meet the strict, year-round dietary regulations and are considered kosher, are nevertheless often unacceptable, or require special preparation for Passover use in the Jewish home in order to be kosher for Passover.

► How Can One Tell if a Product is Kosher for Passover?

Most processed foods and beverages require special rabbinical supervision for Passover use. They must also be kosher for year-round use, and prepared in accordance with all of the regular Jewish dietary laws. Jewish consumers are urged to look for the "ⓄP" or the "Ⓞ Kosher for Passover" designations as an integral part of the product label, or else be familiar with the Rabbi or organization giving the Passover endorsement. The mere mention of Kosher for Passover on the label is not a sufficient guarantee of the product's acceptability for Passover use. The largest and most widely respected kosher supervisory agency is the Orthodox Union. Its registered service mark, "ⓄP," on thousands of consumer and industrial food products, is a guarantee of the highest standards of *kashrut* for Passover.





Processed foods not carrying any rabbinical supervision should be cleared with a Rabbi before Passover use.

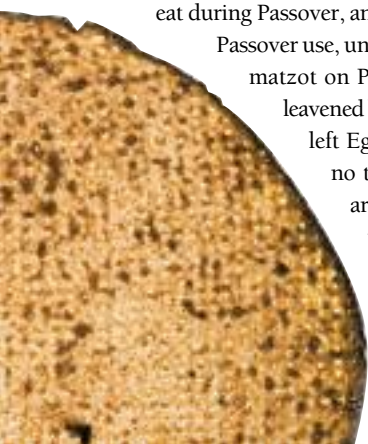
What is “Matzah”?

Matzah is a crisp, flat, unleavened bread, made of flour and water, which must be baked before the dough has had time to rise. It is the only type of “bread” which Jews may eat during Passover, and it must be made specifically for Passover use, under rabbinical supervision. Eating matzot on Passover commemorates the unleavened bread eaten by the Jews when they left Egypt in such haste that there was no time for the dough to rise. There are many mystical concepts tied to the unique relationship between matzot and chametz on Passover. One interpretation equates mat-

zot with God’s commandments (*mitzvot*), and *chametz* with sin (*chayt*). The rigorous laws of Passover, in this interpretation, represent the great care that must be taken to follow the Godly path.

What Special Preparations Must Be Made in the Jewish Home for Passover

The home must be thoroughly cleaned of all *chametz* before Passover. Any *chametz* not removed from a Jew’s premises before Passover should be sold. Jewish law forbids the use of any *chametz* which remains in a Jew’s possession during Passover, even after the holiday is over (see information about selling the *chametz* on page 77 and about shopping after Passover on page 93). All cooking and eating utensils must be either



set aside exclusively for Passover use, or, in some cases, "made kosher" in consultation with a Rabbi, according to the procedures of Jewish law. All of these preparations must be completed by the morning before Passover. See the following section, "Preparing for Passover," for more specific details.



► What are the Observances for the Period Before Passover Begins?

This year Wednesday, April 8 is a fast day for Jewish firstborn males, in commemoration of the tenth plague, the slaying of the firstborn male Egyptians, which immediately resulted in the Exodus. In many congregations, a special celebration *Siyum* is con-

ducted, following which participating firstborn males are permitted to break their fast. A ritual search for *chametz* is conducted Tuesday evening, April 7, and the *chametz* that is found is burned the next morning.

► What is the Passover *Seder*?

The *Seder* is a ritual banquet which reenacts the exodus, conducted on both the first and second evenings of Passover (Wednesday and Thursday, April 8 and April 9, 2009). Its major feature is the reading of the *Haggadah*, which relates, in detail, the events of the exodus of the Jewish people from ancient Egypt, complete with symbolic reenactments using kosher wine, specially prepared matzot, and bitter herbs. The specially prepared *shmurah* matzot are made specifically for use at the *Seder*, with specially supervised flour according to particularly stringent Jewish traditions and laws. The bitter herbs (*maror*), consisting of either romaine lettuce or horseradish, recall the harsh conditions of slavery in ancient Egypt. Four cups of wine are consumed during the course of the *Seder* to commemorate the redemption of the Jewish people, the sanctity of the holiday and events related in the *Haggadah*. The *Seder* is a traditional occasion for Jewish families to gather together to renew and strengthen their Jewish identities.

► When Do Passover Dietary Laws End?

All Passover dietary laws remain in effect until nightfall of the eighth day of Passover, Thursday, April 16, 2009. *Chametz* which was in the possession or jurisdiction of a Jew during Passover, in violation of Jewish law, is forbidden for consumption by any Jew even after Passover.

► What Other Restrictions are Applicable on Passover?

Sabbath-like restrictions on work and creative activity, with the exceptions of carrying and the use of fire (with respect to cooking and the preparation of food), apply to all Jews on the first two and last two days of Passover. Full Sabbath rules remain in effect on *Shabbat Chol Hamoed*, April 10-11. During the remaining days of *Chol Hamoed*, the intermediate three days

(Sunday through Tuesday evening), only nonessential work activities and crafts, as defined by Jewish law, are prohibited.

Do Pets Need Kosher for Passover Food?

Since it is forbidden to own or benefit from *chametz* during Passover, food that contains *chametz* may not be fed to pets. However, it is permitted to give pets food that contains *kitniyot*. If one is unable to procure pet food that does not contain *chametz*, some rabbinical authorities allow for a sale, which would transfer to a gentile the ownership and responsibility of caring for the pet. Ask your Rabbi for guidance.

PREPARING for PASSOVER

Removing Chametz

1 Prior to Passover, every Jew is required to remove all *chametz* from his home, property, and all premises under his or her jurisdiction (e.g., desk, office, locker, car). Even if one will not be on the premises during Passover, as long as one is there within 30 days of Passover, the obligation to remove all *chametz* before Passover applies. In such cases, one should consult a competent halachic authority and make the necessary arrangements.

2 To facilitate the removal of *chametz*, each Jew is obligated to conduct a diligent search in all places where *chametz* may have been kept or consumed any time during the preceding year. The specified time for this search this year is Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at nightfall (approximately 45 minutes after sunset), traditionally using a feather and the light of a single candle. If

using a candle is impractical or unsafe, a flashlight should be used. However, Passover cleaning in Jewish homes must be started much earlier, as the premises should be clean by the time the search begins. The blessing is recited before the search begins, and a public disclaimer of ownership of *chametz* (*bitul*) is recited afterward. These texts can be found in most traditional *Haggadot*.

3 It is permissible to sell *chametz* to a non-Jew before the restrictions on *chametz* go into effect on the day before Passover. To comply with the stringent requirements of Jewish law, the sale is conducted by contract through an Orthodox Rabbi, who is empowered to act as an agent. The sold *chametz* becomes the non-Jew's property until after Passover ends, and must be treated accordingly. The *chametz* should be locked away until after Passover, when the Rabbi repurchases it for the community.

Utensils For Use on Passover

1 Jewish law requires special dishes, cooking utensils, glassware, and silverware for Passover use, with separate meat and dairy sets. They can be made of any material, including plastic or paper. Once these are used for *chametz*, they may not be used again on Passover.

2 If it is not possible to maintain a complete set of separate utensils for Passover, it may be possible to use some year-round utensils for Passover after a special "*kashering*" procedure. "*Kashering*" should only be done under the guidance of an Orthodox Rabbi. Metal and wooden utensils, if they can be thoroughly cleaned, may be "*kashered*", but earthenware utensils may not be "*kashered*". Procedures for "*kashering*" depend on how the utensil was used during the year. Ask your Rabbi for details.

3 Shelves, countertops and eating surfaces used year-round should be cleaned and covered for Passover use, and special dish racks, sink racks and basins should be used. Cooking surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and covered. Ovens should be thoroughly cleaned, and either "*kashered*" by being burnt out (consult your Rabbi for details) or used with a special insert liner. For more information see the "*Kashering Primer*" on page 84.

{ For more detailed instructions and guidance, a Rabbi should be consulted



► Foods Which May Not be Used on Passover

1 Any food or food product containing fermented grain products (*chametz*) may not be used or remain in a Jew's possession on Passover. Even foods with minute amounts of *chametz* ingredients, or foods processed on utensils which are used for other *chametz*-containing foods, are not permissible for Passover use.

2 Ashkenazic Jews, (Jews of European descent) also do not eat many legumes (*kitniyot*) — beans, corn, peas, rice, etc., and products containing them as ingredients throughout Passover, while Sephardic, Yemenite and Oriental Jewish customs vary from one community to another.

3 Because of the large number of food products which contain *chametz* or *kitniyot* ingredi-



ents, only food products manufactured under reliable rabbinical supervision should be purchased for Passover use. That includes beverages, condiments, spices, and all processed foods such as fruits and vegetables, fish, meat and dairy products, and especially, baked goods.

4 There are many families which maintain the tradition of additional restrictions to their Passover diet. Some do not eat any food products made of matzah or matzah meal mixed with water (*gebrokts*) during the first seven days of Passover.

BRIEF GUIDE to the PASSOVER SEDER

► Seder Plate

A special *Seder* plate is displayed during the *Seder*, containing the key symbols of Passover. The plate is carefully prepared and placed before the head of the household, or the one conducting the *Seder*, who dispenses the *Seder* foods to each of the participants. The following items appear on the *Seder* plate:

- **THREE WHOLE MATZOT** — unleavened “bread” (either on the plate or next to it);
- **MAROR** — bitter herbs, usually horseradish or romaine lettuce;
- **CHAROSET** — special mixture of apples, nuts, wine and cinnamon symbolizing mortar;
- **KARPAS** — a vegetable, preferably parsley or celery;
- **ZEROA** — a piece of roasted or boiled meat or poultry, preferably a shankbone, recalling the Paschal sacrifice of the original Exodus. Before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple the Paschal sacrifice was the central feature of the *Seder*;
- **BAYTZAH** — a roasted or boiled egg, commemorating the festival sacrifice that was brought in the Jerusalem Temple. An egg is used because it is a traditional food for mourners, reminding us of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem;
- **OTHER**—There are other items that can be placed on *Seder* plates depending on the customs followed by the family.

► Basic Obligations

There are five basic obligations (*mitzvot*) performed by each Jew, in the course of the *Seder* conducted according to the traditional *Haggadah*:

- 1** Eating matzot
- 2** Drinking four cups of wine (*Arbah Kosot*)
- 3** Eating bitter herbs (*maror*)
- 4** Relating the story of the exodus (*Haggadah* or *Magid*)
- 5** Reciting Psalms of praise (*Hallel*)

► Matzah

1 There are three times during the course of the *Seder* when matzah must be eaten — at the

beginning of the *Seder* meal, when the special blessing over matzah is made, for *Korech* (Hillel sandwich) together with the *maror*, and at the end of the meal for the *afikoman*.

2 For the appropriate minimum quantities of matzah, and the time period in which it must be consumed, please refer to the following section on *Shiurim*.

3 Three unbroken matzot are required for the *Seder* plate for each *Seder*. Each individual must consume the minimum specified quantity of matzah during the course of the *Seder*. If the matzot from the *Seder* plate are insufficient, they should be supplemented by additional matzah.

4 The matzah is eaten while reclining on the left side as a symbol of freedom. The piece of matzah called *afikoman* should be eaten before midnight, and no solid food should be eaten thereafter.

5 To fulfill the *mitzvot* of the *Seder*, one must use *shmurah* matzot, which are produced under a special standard of supervision, beginning with the harvest of the grain (rather than with its milling into flour, as with regular matzot for Passover).

6 According to Ashkenazic practice, matzah made with fruit juice or eggs, including egg matzah, chocolate covered egg matzah, and white grape matzah, are permissible on Passover only for the elderly, sick, or young children who cannot digest regular matzah. Under no circumstances should they be eaten by others at any time during Passover, nor can they be eaten to fulfill the *mitzvot* of the *Seder*. Sephardim should consult their Rabbi.

Four Cups of Wine

1 Each Jew is obligated to drink four cups of wine at these specific times during each *Seder*: the first at the start of the *Seder*, following *kiddush*; the second before the meal, after reciting the *Haggadah* story; the third following the grace after the meal; and the last after completing the Psalms of praise (*Hallel*).

2 Please consult the following section on *Shiurim* for minimum volumes necessary to be consumed and time limits for each of the four cups.

3 Red wine is the preferred beverage for use during the *Seder*. If a person has difficulty drinking wine, it may be diluted with kosher grape juice, although some authorities hold that one should dilute the wine with water. If one wishes to dilute the wine with water, an Orthodox Rabbi should be consulted to determine the minimum acceptable proportions. If an individual cannot drink any grape product, then a Rabbi should be consulted on another substitute beverage in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of drinking the four cups.

4 One should drink the wine reclining on the left side, in order to symbolize freedom.

Bitter Herbs (*Maror*)

1 Everyone is obligated to eat bitter herbs twice at each *Seder*. According to most authorities, the bitter herbs may consist either of romaine lettuce, horseradish or endives.

2 When using romaine lettuce, one may use the stalks or leaves. When horseradish is used, it should be chopped, ground or grated to reduce its strength, but it must be kept covered prior to use so as not to be weakened too much. Cooked or preserved vegetables are not suitable for *maror*; therefore commercially prepared grated horseradish, which is packed in vinegar, may not be used for the *mitzvah*.

When lettuce is used, it must be cleaned and inspected very carefully to remove the small insects which often are present in its leaves. One way to clean lettuce of insects is to soak it for not more than half an hour in salt water, and rinse it in fresh water before inspection. See "How To Check Romaine" on page 16.

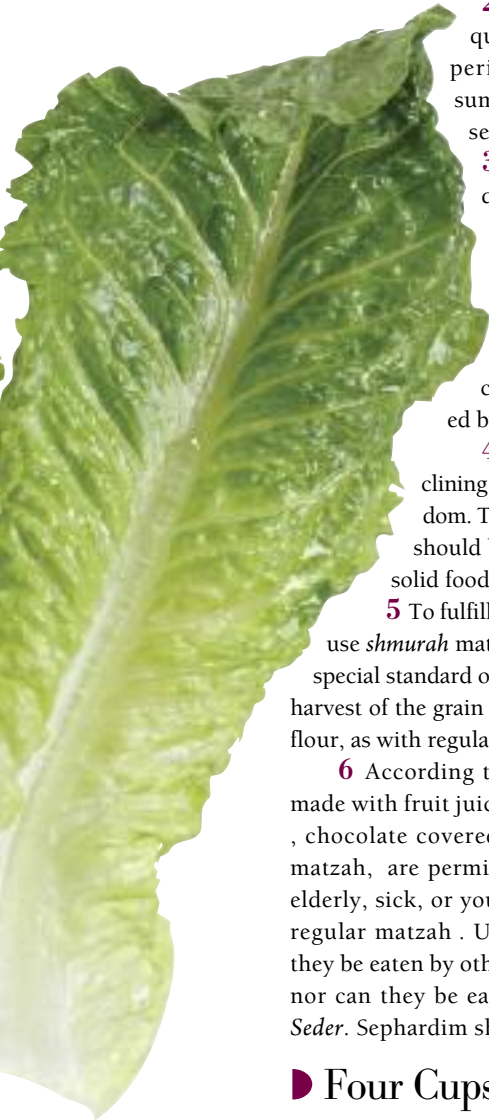
3 The *maror* is dipped in *charoset*, a specially prepared mixture of wine, nuts, cinnamon, and apples, symbolizing the bricks and mortar of ancient Egypt.

4 Immediately thereafter, a second, smaller volume of *maror* is eaten with matzah in *Korech* (the Hillel sandwich).

5 Consult the following section on *Shiurim* for the minimum volume of *maror* to be consumed each time and the time limits.

Relating the Story of the Exodus and *Hallel*

1 Most of the unique *Seder* practices are designed to stimulate interest and arouse curiosity in the



exodus story. The central theme for the *Haggadah* is the discussion of the exodus, a timeless event which has forged countless generations of Jews into an unbroken chain through history, with each year's *Seder* another link in that chain.

2 The *Seder* is a symbolic reenactment of the exodus, with a compelling message for young and old alike. *Seder* participants are encouraged to discuss the various aspects of the exodus in detail, beyond the text of the *Haggadah*.

3 Young children are encouraged to participate in the *Seder* to the extent of their ability. In addition to the Four Questions at the start of the *Seder*, they are encouraged to drink the Four Cups, eat the matzah and *maror*, and ask as many questions as they wish.

4 In addition to relating the story of the exodus, each Jew at the *Seder* is obligated to discuss three central elements of the *Seder* ritual — the Paschal sacrifice, the matzah and the *maror*, as explained in the *Haggadah*. The *Seder* is a miniature recreation of the exodus, and participants should imagine themselves as leaving Egypt.

5 The formal part of the *Seder* closes with the group of Psalms known as Hallel, which praise the Almighty and His special relationship with the people of Israel.

6 The *Seder* traditionally concludes with the singing of several lively songs celebrating the relationship between God and the Jewish people.

◆ *Shiurim*: Measures and Minimums

In order to fulfill the mitzvot of the Passover *Seder*, it is necessary to consume a minimum quantity (*shiur*) of the four cups of wine, matzah and *maror*, in a minimum period of time. For wine, the volume of most of a *revi'it* should be consumed. For matzah and *maror*, a *k'zayit* is the minimum volume. The time limit is *k'day achilat pras*.

Rabbinic authorities have historically disagreed as to the exact quantities that each of these represent in modern measures. Below you will find modern equivalent values for the minimum acceptable quantities (*b'dieved*) for each of these mitzvot, according to the listings published by the *Otzar Haposkim* of Jerusalem, together with some practical suggestions for estimating these amounts. Anyone who has diffi-



culty consuming these amounts should ask a Rabbi for guidance.

Minimum Volume for Wine:

> 86 cc (3.0 fluid ounces)

This should be the minimum size of the wine cups used for the four cups. Each *Seder* participant must drink more than half this volume for each of the four cups to fulfill the mitzvah.

Minimum Quantity of *Matzah*:

> Approximately one-half of an average, machine-made matzah, or one-third of a hand-made matzah.

Minimum Volume of *Maror* (Bitter Herbs):

> 19 grams (0.7 fluid ounces).

When using ground horseradish:

> this volume can be easily estimated in a measuring cup.

When using lettuce leaves:

> enough to cover an area of 80 square inches (8" by 10").

When using lettuce stalks:

> enough to cover an area of 15 square inches (3" by 5").

◆ Time Limits (*K'day Achilat Pras*)

Some people are careful to follow those opinions which teach that the entire amounts for each mitzvah should be consumed in one or two swallows. In any case, the drinking of each cup of wine and the eating of the matzah and *maror* should be completed within four minutes. In case of difficulty, ask a Rabbi.