

## Spring Festival – What is Pesach/Passover?

### What does Pesach mean and why celebrate it?

**Pesach/Passover** is a spiritual Festival that is held in March or April.

It is at the beginning of the agricultural year. This festival and Biblical Holy day is meaningful and practical. The Holy Days were revealed by God, and through them all believers can be blessed, both Jews and Gentiles ( non-Jews). God’s Holy Days (Exodus 23, Leviticus 23) of which Passover is the first festival of the year is a great object lesson. It is an object lesson in a story and teaches about God and his plan for the world. “An object lesson is an earthly story with a heavenly or spiritual meaning.” There are exciting new truths to be learned when participating in God’s holy days. God’s holy days are intended to be a reminder of his commands and his interaction with his people throughout history (Stern, 2016).



### Who celebrates Pesach and what does it refer to?

Typically, Jewish and Evangelical Christian traditions celebrate Pesach/ Passover. All Jewish traditions celebrate Pesach and the Seder meal which commemorates the meal the Israelites ate before fleeing Egypt and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. God called Moses and instructed him how to set his chosen people, the Children of Israel, free from their bondage in Egypt. They had lived in Egypt over 400 years and it was time to make them into a nation; a people set apart for His purposes.

Moses approached Pharaoh to set the Israelites free, but he refused. After God sent 9 plagues (Exodus 9:1 – 11:10) Pharaoh still did not allow the people to be released from their bondage of hard labour and slavery. Therefore, God sent the 10<sup>th</sup> plague (Exodus 12) finally convincing Pharaoh to let God’s people go. He was angry and sent the children of Israel away. Moses instructed the Children of Israel to apply the blood of a lamb to the doorposts of their homes so that the angel of death would “Passover” their home and the first born in that home would not die. The Israelites ate their evening meal, called the Seder, in haste and fled Egypt. Celebrating the Seder meal is a remembrance of fleeing Egypt and their forced labour. Read on to discover the meaning of Pesach and the purpose of the symbols to remind people about what had happened many years ago.

### What is the Seder or Pesach meal about? Describe the lessons we learn?

Seder means order. Each item in the Seder meal is symbolic with special meanings and is served in a different order from other meals. Each part of the meal is explained and why it is important to the meal.

(<http://www.jewfaq.org/seder.htm>):

1. Greens - Parsley represents spring, new life or new birth. In God there is a new beginning and hope. Parsley is dipped in salt water and represents the tears shed in Egypt and for the tears of our sin which is forgiveness.  
(John 16:20; Rev. 20:4, Psalm 56:8)
2. Matzah - 3 pieces of unleavened bread are symbolically used during the meal and are a remembrance of the Manna in the wilderness. It does not have yeast, and therefore is crisp like a cracker. It is pierced and has stripes. It is the bread of affliction in Egypt, and redemption when arriving in the Promised Land. Today, in *Messianic Judaism*, *Yeshua represents the unleavened*

*bread*. The Matza (pierced and striped) is a symbol of the suffering of Yeshua before the crucifixion. *Matzah is a symbol of the body of Yeshua/Jesus the redeemer and Messiah. It is used also at communion; the Lord's Supper.* Yeast represents sin and so the home is cleaned so that during the Pesach celebration of 7 days there is no yeast or food made with yeast present. John 8:36, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 5:8; Matt 11:28.

3. Maror or Bitter Herbs such as horse radish reminds people of the sorrow and bitterness of slavery in Egypt. *(Today, in Messianic Judaism it is remembering the bitterness of sin).*
4. Charoset – chopped apples, honey, nuts, wine/grape juice, and cinnamon remind people of the bondage of Egypt. It reminds them that the mortar in the bricks have now been removed from their lives. *(Today, in Messianic Judaism it is remembering that Yeshua's death on the cross released us from the bondage of sin. John 3:16, John 1:29.)*
5. Roasted Egg represents new birth. *(In Messianic Judaism it is roasted because the Pesach lamb has come and they are waiting for the Messiah's return as the coming king.)*
6. Shank bone – remember the lamb that was sacrificed. *(Messianic Judaism believes Yeshua was the Pesach lamb who died for our sins and rose again).*
7. Four Cups of wine/grape juice represents the blood of the lamb in traditional Judaism. *(In Messianic Judaism the wine represents the blood of the Lamb, Yeshua that covers sin).* At the meal 4 sips are taken and each sip represents a Cup.
  - a. The 1<sup>st</sup> sip is the Cup of sanctification (set apart), Luke 22:42, 1 Corinthians 5:7;
  - b. The 2<sup>nd</sup> represents the Cup of the plagues of Egypt (dipping the finger into the Cup 9 times remembering each plague).
  - c. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cup is the blood of redemption (forgiveness by the blood of the lamb and a new life of God's joy. Luke 22:20.)
  - d. The 4<sup>th</sup> Cup is the Cup of praise and after that the singing the Hallel (praise) psalms. Psalms 113 to 118.

A place is set at the table for Elijah, symbolizing Elijah coming to announce the first coming of the Messiah. This is what traditional Jews look forward to. Elijah is still to come. The cup of Elijah means the future and what is still to come (the coming of Messiah for the first time). Traditional Jews do not believe that the Yeshua the Messiah has already come.

### **How do the meanings of the symbols in the Pesach differ among people?**

***For Messianic Jewish believers in Yeshua*** - The Seder is about the Passover lamb/Yeshua. 1 Corinthians 5:7. Messianic Jews understand that the 4<sup>th</sup> cup of Elijah in the Seder represents the second coming of the Messiah. Luke 22:20. Messianic Jews celebrate Pesach as do other Jews; however, Yeshua is in the Seder because they believe that Yeshua has already come the first time. Pesach for Messianic Jews includes celebrating 3 events:

- the Seder meal,
- the crucifixion of Yeshua and
- The resurrection of Yeshua.

The Festival is celebrated for 7 days. The Seder ends with singing and Jewish dancing of joy and celebration.

**Typical Evangelical Christians believe Jesus is in the Passover/Easter celebrations which include remembering/celebrating:**

- Good Friday – the crucifixion of Jesus and the Lord’s Supper
  - Story of Jesus for children – from the gospel of Luke ([www.jesusfilm.org](http://www.jesusfilm.org))
  - The Lord’s Supper is composed of a number of parts
    - Introducing the Lord’s Supper and the story from the New Testament
    - Taking the bread which represents the body of Jesus. ,
- Easter Sunday – the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday ([www.jesusfilm.org](http://www.jesusfilm.org))
  - Story of Jesus for children – from the gospel of Luke

Christians remember the Passover story of the Children of Israel and their wilderness wandering; however the focus of the Easter celebration is on the crucifixion (Good Friday) and resurrection (Sunday) of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 11:23 - 26 is used as the script for the Lord’s Supper celebration.

1 Corinthians 11:27 – 34 is read to inform participants during the Lord’s supper what they must be aware of before they eat the bread and drink the Cup; and to think if they are worthy of drinking it.

**Resources**

**Christ in the Passover - The Seder by Jews for Jesus YouTube**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBGz3k37kDE> (38 min.)

A simple description of the Seder meal celebrated in the home involving the family.

**Full Messianic Passover (Pesach) Celebration with Rabbi Jonathan Cahn (Passover part 2 of 2)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2LysEMaXHw> (1:27 min)

This movie is a more detailed and descriptive and formal presentation to a group of adults.

**Judaism 101** <http://www.jewfaq.org/seder.htm>

More information about Judaism.

**Chabad -**

**Jewish Practice, Learning & Values, Community & Values, Inspiration & Entertainment**

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1675888/jewish/Jewish-Practice.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1675888/jewish/Jewish-Practice.htm)

Stern, David, 2016. The Complete Jewish Study Bible

Messianic Jewish Bible for those who believe in Yeshua.