

PASSOVER



Passover is an eight-day springtime holiday that celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and their freedom from slavery. The Israelites were enslaved and persecuted in Egypt, and forced to do manual labor for the Pharaoh. Through Moses, God inflicted 10 plagues on the Egyptians until Pharaoh relented and let the Israelites flee to the desert. As they were leaving, Pharaoh had a change of heart and began pursuing the Israelites, who were trapped by the Red Sea. God split the sea and the Israelites crossed freely to the other side, drowning those who tried to pursue them.

The retelling of the exile story and engaging children in the Passover celebration are key aspects of the holiday.

CUSTOMS

SEDER

On Passover night, many Jews participate in a celebratory *seder* meal. During the *seder*, which means “order,” we read from a *Haggadah* booklet with the holiday rituals described in a specific order. Some key aspects of the *seder* include drinking four celebratory cups of wine (or grape juice), singing the four questions, eating *matzah* and the retelling of the exodus story. A designated *seder* plate is used to hold all the ritual foods – each having a symbolic meaning to help evoke the slavery-to-freedom experience – such as salt water to remind us of the tears of enslaved people and *charoset* (a blended dip made from apples, grape juice and nuts) that reminds us of the mortar the Israelites used to build bricks in Egypt.



MATZAH AND CHAMETZ

Tradition teaches that when the Israelites fled Egypt they did not have time to let their bread rise. Today, Jews eat a flat cracker-like bread called *matzah* on Passover. Jewish law states that one must not consume any leavened products (known as *chametz*) on Passover, and rid their homes of *chametz*, which includes all breads, cookies, cakes and leavened wheat products.

COUNTING OMER

There are 49 days from Passover until the holiday of Shavuot, where we celebrate the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. To prepare ourselves spiritually for Shavuot, there is a practice of counting off each night, known as counting the *omer*.

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

- **Afikoman hunt** During the *seder*, hide a piece of *matzah* somewhere in your house and send the kids on a hunt to find it! The *afikoman* (dessert) is the last thing eaten at the *seder*.
- **Passover play** Have your children dress up as characters from the Passover story and act out the story as a family.
- **Decorate a seder plate** Using two clear plastic plates, decorate one plate with colorful markers and stickers, then place another clean, plastic plate on top of it.
- **Matzah pizza** Make *matzah* pizza using a piece of *matzah*, tomato sauce, cheese and your favorite pizza toppings.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, ACTIVITIES
AND RECIPES, VISIT

mandeljcc.org/holidays



Jewish Holiday Calendar *The dates of Jewish holidays shift slightly on the secular calendar from year to year since the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle. Holidays begin the evening before at sundown.*