

# Celestial Grace Ministry

## What is The Passover?

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**The Passover comes from a biblical story written in the Old Testament Bible or the Torah and from the Book of Genesis.**

### **About the Passover:**

Passover is one of the most widely celebrated Jewish holidays. It commemorates the biblical story of Exodus, when Hebrew slaves were released by God from bondage in Egypt. Called "pesach" (pay-sak) in Hebrew.

Passover is a celebration of freedom observed by Jews everywhere. The name derives from the story of God's angel of death "passing over" the homes of Hebrews when God sent the tenth plague upon the Egyptians, the killing of the first-born children.

Passover begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nisan (late March or early April in the Gregorian calendar). Passover is celebrated for seven days in Israel and for reform Jews around the world, and for eight days for most other Jews in the Diaspora (those outside of Israel).

The [reason for this difference](#) has to do with difficulties in reconciling the lunar calendar with the Jewish calendar in ancient times.

Passover is marked by several carefully structured rituals enacted over the seven or eight days of the celebration. Conservative, observant Jews follow these rituals carefully, though more progressive, liberal Jews may be more relaxed about their observance. The most important ritual is the Passover meal, also known as the Seder.

### THE PASSOVER SEDER

Every year, Jews are commanded to retell the Passover story. This usually takes place during the [Passover Seder](#), which is a service held at home as part of the Passover celebration.

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The Seder is always observed on the first night of Passover, and in some homes on the second night, as well. The Seder follows a carefully prescribed order of 15 steps. On both nights, the Seder includes a dinner that serves highly symbolic foods that are carefully prepared on a [Seder Plate](#). The telling of the Passover story (the *Magid*) is the highlight of the Seder.

It begins with the youngest person in the room asking four ceremonial questions and concludes with a blessing recited over wine after the story is told.

### KOSHER FOR PASSOVER?

Passover is a holiday that has certain dietary restrictions associated with it. Jews are instructed to eat only food that follow certain preparation rules that make them *kosher for Passover*.

The most important rule has to do with eating unleavened bread, called *matzah*. This custom is said to derive from the part of the Passover story in which the Hebrew slaves fled Egypt so quickly that their bread didn't have time to rise.

Eating of matzah, which is unleavened bread, is an act of remembrance of the extreme haste with which the Hebrews were forced to flee Egypt to freedom. Some suggest that it represents followers assuming a humble, subservient attitude for Passover—in other words, to be slave-like in the face of God.

In addition to eating matzah, Jews avoid any leavened bread or foods that might include leavening ingredients during the entire week of Passover. Some even avoid leavened foods for the entire month before Passover. Observant Jews also avoid eating any food products containing wheat, barley, rye, spelt, or oats.

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According to tradition, these grains, called *chametz*, will naturally rise, or leaven, if they are not cooked in less than 18 minutes.

For observant Jews, these grains are not only forbidden for Passover, but are carefully searched out and expelled from the home before Passover begins, sometimes in highly ritualized ways.

Observant families may keep an entire set of dishes and cookware that are never used for cooking chametz and reserved only for Passover meals.

In the Ashkenazi tradition corn, rice, millet, and legumes are also on the forbidden list. This is said to be because these grains resemble the forbidden chametz grains.

And because things like corn syrup and cornstarch can be found in many unexpected foods, the easiest way to avoid inadvertently violating the rules of kashrut during Passover is to only use food products that are specifically labeled "[Kosher for Passover.](#)"

At the end of the biblical [Book of Genesis](#), Joseph brings his family to Egypt.

Over the following centuries, the descendants of Joseph's family (the Hebrews) become so numerous that when a new king comes to power, he fears what might happen if the Hebrews decide to rise against the Egyptians.

He decides that the best way to avoid this situation is to enslave them ([Exodus 1](#)).

According to tradition, these enslaved Hebrews are the ancestors of modern day Jews.

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Despite pharaoh's attempt to subdue the Hebrews, they continue to have many children. As their numbers grow, pharaoh comes up with another plan: he will send soldiers to kill all newborn male babies who were born to Hebrew mothers. This is where the story of Moses begins.

### MOSES

In order to save Moses from the grisly fate pharaoh has decreed, his mother and sister put him in a basket and set it afloat on the river. Their hope is that the basket will float to safety and whoever finds the baby will adopt him as their own.

His sister, Miriam, follows along as the basket floats away. Eventually, it is discovered by none other than pharaoh's daughter. She saves Moses and raises him as her own so that a Hebrew child is raised as a prince of Egypt.

When [Moses](#) grows up, he kills an Egyptian guard when he sees him beating a Hebrew slave. Then Moses flees for his life, heading into the desert. In the desert, he joins the family of Jethro, a Midian priest, by marrying Jethro's daughter and having children with her.

He becomes a shepherd for Jethro's flock and one day, while out tending the sheep, Moses meets God in the wilderness. The voice of God calls out to him from a burning bush and Moses answers: "Hineini!" ("Here I am!" in Hebrew.)

God tells Moses that he has been chosen to free the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

Moses is not sure he can carry out this command. But God reassures Moses that he will have help in the form of God's aide and his brother, Aaron.

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### THE 10 PLAGUES

Soon afterward, Moses returns to Egypt and demands that pharaoh release the Hebrews from bondage. Pharaoh refuses and as a result,

God sends [ten plagues](#) upon Egypt:

1. Blood - The waters of Egypt are turned to blood. All the fish die and water becomes unusable.
2. Frogs - Hordes of frogs swarm the land of Egypt.
3. Gnats or Lice - Masses of gnats or lice invade Egyptian homes and plague the Egyptian people.
4. Wild Animals - Wild animals invade Egyptian homes and lands, causing destruction and wreaking havoc.
5. Pestilence - Egyptian livestock is struck down with disease.
6. Boils - The Egyptian people are plagued by painful boils that cover their bodies.
7. Hail - Severe weather destroys Egyptian crops and beats down upon them.
8. Locusts - Locusts swarm Egypt and eat any remaining crops and food.
9. Darkness - Darkness covers the land of Egypt for three days.
10. Death of the Firstborn - The firstborn of every Egyptian family is killed. Even the firstborn of Egyptian animals die.

The tenth plague is where the Jewish holiday of Passover derives its name because while the Angel of Death visited Egypt, it "passed over"

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Hebrew homes, which had been marked with lamb's blood on the doorposts.

### THE EXODUS

After the tenth plague, pharaoh relents and releases the Hebrews. They quickly bake their bread, not even pausing for the dough to rise, which is why Jews eat [Matzah](#) (unleavened bread) during Passover.

Soon after they leave their homes, Pharaoh changes his mind and sends soldiers after the Hebrews, but when the former slaves reach the Sea of Reeds, the waters part so that they can escape.

When the soldiers try to follow them, the waters crash down upon them. According to Jewish legend, when the angels began rejoicing as the Hebrews escaped and the soldiers drowned, God reprimanded them, saying:

"My creatures are drowning, and you're singing songs!" This Midrash (rabbinic story) teaches us that we should not rejoice in the sufferings of our enemies.

Once they have crossed the water, the Hebrews begin the next part of their journey as they search for the Promised Land. The story of Passover recounts how the Hebrews gained their freedom and became the ancestors of the Jewish people.



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Sincerely,

*Pastor Andy Anderson*

Celestial Grace Ministry

**May the grace of God be with you always --- Amen**

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