

Seder, the Passover Meal

Each spring Jewish families gather for a special Passover meal called the Seder. They gather to remember the first Passover, when the angel of God's judgment passed over the houses of the Hebrews and spared the lives of their firstborn. They follow a ritual at the meal—saying certain things, singing certain songs, and eating certain foods in a specific order. Families share these foods, each of which has a special meaning.

- ▶ matzoh, which is unleavened (made without yeast) bread, as mentioned in Exodus, to remember the Hebrews' hurry to start their journey out of Egypt
- ▶ a lamb bone, to remember the lamb that was sacrificed on the first Passover
- ▶ bitter herbs, such as horseradish, to remember the bitterness of slavery
- ▶ haroset, a mixture of apples, nuts, and cinnamon, to remember the mortar for the bricks that they made during slavery
- ▶ salt water, to remember the tears shed during the time of slavery
- ▶ green vegetables, to remember that God gave them a new life
- ▶ an egg, a sign of new life



In addition family members drink cups of wine at certain times during the meal.

As part of the ritual, the youngest child asks a series of questions beginning with “Why is this night different from all other nights?” These questions lead to a recounting of the story of Passover. One piece of matzoh is hidden for the children to find, and it is eaten at the end of the meal. Psalms of praise are also recited.

Comparing Easter and Passover Traditions

After reading the description of a Seder dinner, write a paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, comparing and contrasting this tradition with your traditional Easter celebration.