

# Passover Facts

Passover begins on the 15th of the Hebrew month Nisan and lasts for 7 days in the land of Israel and 8 days in the Diaspora. This year, that's sunset on Monday, April 10th, to nightfall Tuesday, April 18th.

We learn this from Leviticus 23:5-8 - "In the first month, on the 14th day of the month at dusk is Adonai's Passover. And on the 15th day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread for Adonai; for seven days you will eat unleavened bread. On the first day you will have a holy gathering, and on this day you will not do any servile work..."

Passover always happens in the spring, as we are instructed in Exodus 23:15: "You will keep the feast of unleavened bread, for seven days you will eat unleavened bread, as I have commanded you during the appointed time in the Spring - for in it you came out from Egypt..."

We celebrate Passover as a reminder that we were once slaves in the land of Egypt and now we are free. The story of Passover is found in the Torah in the book of Exodus.

According to standard biblical chronology, this event probably took place around 1300 BCE.

In Hebrew, Passover is known as Pesach, which means "to pass over." This is because God passed over the Jewish homes when killing the Egyptian first born sons during the 10th plague, which is also the very first Passover eve.

When the Israelites were finally set free by Pharaoh, they left Egypt so quickly they didn't take time to let their dough rise. This led to us eating matzoh during Passover.

Along with the holidays Shavuot (when we receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai at the beginning of summer) and Sukkot (the festival of booths in the fall), Passover is one of the three pilgrimage festivals (called in Hebrew the *shalosh regalim*). During these 3 holidays the Jews would make pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem.

On the morning of the 14th of Nisan (also the day that Passover begins that evening), any leavened products that remain in our houses is supposed to be burned. Therefore many Jews will "sell" all their *chometz* to a non-Jewish friend during the time of Pesach. You can "sell" your *chometz* for \$1 and then buy it back after Pesach!

It is traditional to have a seder during the first two nights of Pesach. Seder is a Hebrew word meaning "order," and refers to the specific order of the ritual.

Beginning on the second night of Passover, the 16th day of Nisan, we begin Counting the Omer, a reminder that Shavuot (the holiday when we receive the Torah) is approaching 50 days later. We count the Omer with a special blessing.