

One Minute Guide To Passover

The Events of the Exodus

The process of the Exodus began when our forefather Jacob, the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, and his family settled in Egypt as the honored guests of the Pharaoh at that time. The process continued through the Jewish enslavement by the Egyptians; the 10 nature-defying plagues prophesized by Moshe and activated by G-d over a period of 12 months; the subsequent release of the approximately 3 million Jews to freedom after the plague of the death of the first born; the splitting of the Red Sea 7 days after their release; and the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai 7 weeks after their release.

The Centrality of the Exodus

The centrality of the Exodus in Judaism is predicated on the fact that the Jewish people were freed and separated as a unique nation through the clear actions of G-d Himself. Besides the physical freedom achieved, G-d chose us to be the world's spiritual leaders by giving us the mitzvos of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The mitzvos free us from a purely animal-like physical existence, to one in which we can elevate all our actions to be spiritual and G-d connected. Passover is a time where we commemorate the Exodus and renew our spiritual focus.

The Seder

The Seder with its centrality of the telling of the story enable us to experientially reconnect with the slavery and freedom of the Exodus and express our appreciation to G-d for our redemption and selection as His chosen people. The salt water in which the green vegetable is dipped and the bitter herbs are associated with our bondage. The four cups of wine and the festival meal help us relive our freedom.

The Holiday of Matzah

The Matzah is the central component of both the Seder and the 8 days of Passover. Matzah, consisting of just flour and water was our no frills food when we were slaves in Egypt. It's also a symbol of our freedom because we hastily left Egypt without time to bake bread.

On a spiritual level, the leaven in bread makes it more digestible and flavorful. This is appropriate for the rest of the year when our main challenge is to integrate the physical into the spiritual. On Passover, we eat only Matzah and abstain from the physically oriented leaven. This allows us to keep spiritually focused as we recharge our spiritual mission and focus during the holiday of Passover.