

PASSOVER – TEN QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. What is Passover?

Passover (or Pesach in Hebrew) is one of the most important festivals in the Jewish Calendar. It commemorates the freedom of the Israelites after 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

2. When is Passover?

Passover falls on the 15th of the Hebrew month Nisan.

3. How long does Passover last?

It lasts for seven days in Israel and 8 days outside of Israel. This year Passover begins on 19th April and ends on 26th April. The first Seder is eaten on the 18th after the sun has set.

4. Do Jewish people work during Passover?

Working is not permitted on the first 2 days of Passover nor on the final 2 days of the festival. Therefore, this year, 19th & 20th April and 25th & 26th April. You may expect a number of Jewish staff to be on leave these days or for students to be unavailable for exams. Jewish staff are likely to bring their own food during these days, in observance with the traditional dietary laws and may not want to attend meals/drinks events.

5. Why does Passover start on a different day each year?

Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan, which typically falls in March or April of the Gregorian calendar. In accordance with the Hebrew Bible, Nisan is the first month of the Hebrew calendar's festival year. Passover is very often close to Easter as Jesus's last supper was actually a 'seder'.

6. Where does the name 'Passover' originate from?

The Pharaohs in Egypt enslaved the Israelites and would not release them in spite of many requests from Moses. Finally Moses warned the Pharaohs that they would be subjected to plagues by God if they do comply. The plagues were: blood, frogs, lice, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and slaying of the first born. As the 10th plague was aimed at killing the first born, God told all Israelites to mark their doors with the blood of a lamb so that the Angel of Death could pass over these houses and not plague them. Hence the reason why the festival is called: "Passover". The pharaohs eventually gave in and asked the Israelites to leave. They left in such a hurry that they didn't let their bread rise. This is why Jewish people eat unleavened bread called Matzah during Passover.

7. What else is eaten during the Passover celebrations?

During the 8 days of Passover Jewish people cannot eat anything leavened or fermented. Some branches of Judaism also avoid legumes (e.g. beans, soy, rice and corn). Apart from fresh food, everything else is sanctified for eating during Passover and carries a special label.

8. Should any foods be avoided?

It is traditional to have a completely separate set of crockery and cutlery which is only used for Passover. In the run up to the festival, houses are cleaned thoroughly, and all traces of food not "Kosher le Pesach" is used up or "sold". It is said that this is the origin of "spring cleaning".

9. What other celebrations take place?

During the first two evenings, a special meal, called the "Seder" ('order') tells the story of how the Israelites fled from Egypt from a book called the Haggadah ('Narration').

It is customary to lean during the meal, commemorating freedom from slavery. A special plate is prepared, which includes a shank bone, charoset (symbolising the cement) and salt water (symbolising the tears of the slaves). Four overflowing glasses of wine are drunk and everybody takes part, especially the youngest child, who will ask four questions, including "why is this night different to all other nights". The whole table will say "Next Year In Jerusalem", and the evening will end with singing. It is customary to finish the meal by midnight, but the singing can go on much later.

10. How can I wish a Jewish person to have a 'Happy Passover'?

You can say 'Chag kasher v'sameach' which translates as 'may you have a happy and kosher Passover'

SEE OVER FOR A FULL GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

PASSOVER GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Charoset – a fruit and nut mixture served as part of the Seder.

Chametz—meaning ‘unleavened’.

Fermented – food containing something, such as a yeast, bacterium, mold, or enzyme, that causes fermentation.

Haggadah – A book or ‘narration’ used to recite stories from.

Kosher le Pesach - food especially made to eat during Passover, in accordance with Jewish dietary law.

Leavened – food using an agent, such as yeast, that causes batter or dough to rise, especially by fermentation.

Matzah – the unleavened bread eaten during Passover celebrations.

Nisan – the first month of the Hebrew calendar.

Seder – special meal eaten on 1st and 2nd nights of Passover.

Torah —Laws and Commandments followed by Jewish people—commonly known as The Old Testament of the Bible.

Location of Jewish Worshipping Spaces

St Peter’s House, St. Peters House, Precinct Centre, Manchester M13 9GH

www.stpeters.org.uk

Multifaith Prayer Room, Oxford Road, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M13 9WL

www.cmft.nhs.uk/royal-infirmary.aspx

Manchester Reform Synagogue, Jackson's Row, Manchester, M2 5NH

www.jacksonsrow.org

Other Resources and Contacts

Manchester Jewish Students Society: www.manchesterjewishstudents.com

Religion & Belief at the University of Manchester: <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/equality/equality-groups/religion-or-belief-including-lack-of-belief/>

Rabbi Ephraim Guttentag: ephraim@mychaplaincy.co.uk

Rabbi Eli Simon: rabbi@muchabad.org