

“In every generation,  
a person is obliged  
to see themselves as  
though they personally  
went out from Egypt.”

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Mishnah  
Pesachim 10:5

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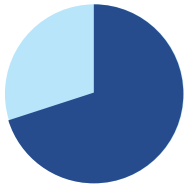
# Passover: Exodus and Us

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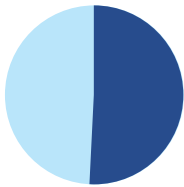
Once we were slaves, so we know the importance of freedom for all people. In this class, we'll examine our history, retell our story of liberation, and learn why Jews have, since our earliest beginnings, been at the forefront of the struggle for human dignity.

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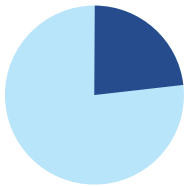
# According to the 2013 Pew Study of American Jews:



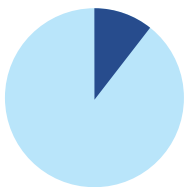
**70% of Jews usually attend a Passover seder**



**53% of Jews usually fast on Yom Kippur**



**23% of Jews usually light Shabbat candles**



**11% of Jews attend synagogue each week**

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Why is this practice different from all other practices?

# The Persistent Power of Passover

## Noam Zion, “A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices”

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Every year, hundreds of giant green sea turtles swim hundreds of miles from their natural habitat on the Brazilian coast to tiny Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean in order to mate.

For years, researchers and the pioneer conservation biologist, Archie Carr, tried to understand how the turtles found their way to the island from such a great distance, when even airplanes had trouble finding it. Carr’s conclusions were fascinating: He claimed that turtles navigate using genetic memory. Millions of years ago, when a strip of land bisected the Atlantic, the journey from Brazil to the closest stretch of the eastern shore was only a short swim.

That land was submerged millions of years ago. But the turtles, driven by genetic memory, still search and find the last remaining remnant of the world that disappeared into the ocean — Ascension Island. Every year, they return to perpetuate the species and the memory.

## Excerpt from the Haggadah

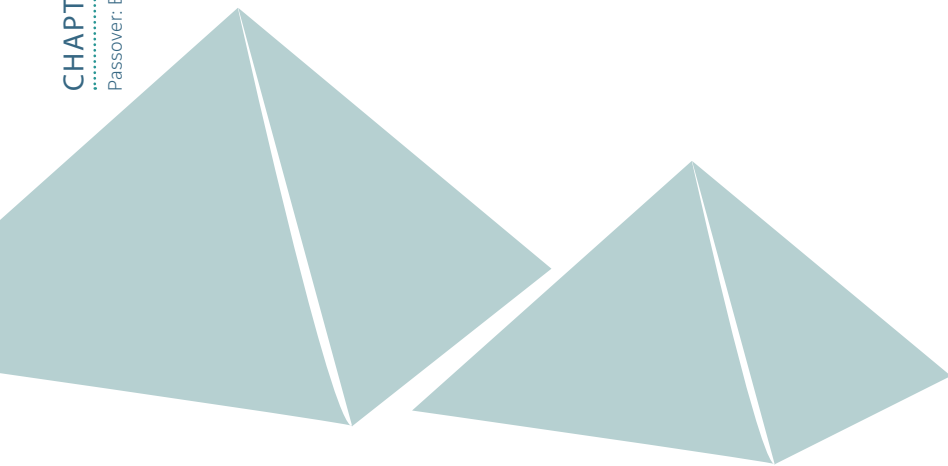
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We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Adonai our God took us out of there, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Had not the Holy One taken out our ancestors from Egypt, know that we and our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. And even if we were all scholars, sages or elders, even if we knew all of the Torah, it would still be a requirement for us to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

And all who expand on the story of the going out from Egypt, this is praiseworthy.

# A Timeline of The Passover Story

(made by you)



“And a new king arose  
over Egypt, one who did  
not remember Joseph.”  
(Exodus 1:8)



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“And the Israelites marched through  
the sea on dry ground. Thus did  
Adonai deliver them from Egypt.”

(Exodus 14:29)

# The Exodus: A Story in Seven Short Chapters

Retold by Rabbi Rachael Barenblat

1 Once upon a time, our people went into *galut*, exile, in the land of Egypt. During a famine, our ancestor Jacob and his family fled to Egypt where food was plentiful. His son Joseph had risen to high position in Pharaoh's court.

2 Generations passed and our people remained in Egypt. In time, a new Pharaoh ascended to the throne and ordered our people enslaved. In fear of rebellion, Pharaoh decreed that all Hebrew boy-children be killed. Two midwives named Shifrah and Puah defied his orders. Through their courage, a boy survived; midrash tells us he was radiant with light. Fearing for his safety, his family placed him in a basket and he floated down the Nile. He was found, and adopted, by Pharaoh's daughter, who named him Moshe because *min ha-mayim m'shitihu*, from the water she drew him forth. She hired his mother Yocheved as his wet-nurse. Thus, he survived to adulthood and was raised as a Prince of Egypt.

3 Although a child of privilege, as he grew he became aware of the slaves who worked in the brickyards of his father. When he saw an overseer mistreat a slave, he struck the overseer and killed him. Fearing retribution, he set out across the Sinai alone. God spoke to him from a burning bush, which though it flamed was not consumed. The Voice called him to lead the Hebrew people to freedom. Moses argued with God, pleading inadequacy, but God disagreed. Sometimes our responsibilities choose us.

# 4

Moses returned to Egypt and went to Pharaoh to argue the injustice of slavery. He gave Pharaoh a mandate that resounds through history: Let my people go. Pharaoh refused, and Moses warned him that Mighty God would strike the Egyptian people. These threats were not idle: ten terrible plagues were unleashed upon the Egyptians. Only when his nation lay in ruins did Pharaoh agree to our liberation.

# 5

Fearful that Pharaoh would change his mind, our people fled, not waiting for their bread dough to rise. (For this reason, we eat unleavened bread as we take part in their journey.) Our people did not leave Egypt alone; a “mixed multitude” went with them. From this we learn that liberation is not for us alone, but for all the nations of the earth.

# 6

Pharaoh’s army followed us to the Sea of Reeds. We plunged into the waters. Only when we had gone as far as we could did the waters part for us. We mourn, even now, that Pharaoh’s army drowned; our liberation is bittersweet because people died in our pursuit.

# 7

To this day we relive our liberation, that we may not become complacent, that we may always rejoice in our freedom.



Rabbi Rachel Barenblat was ordained by ALEPH: the Alliance for Jewish Renewal. She holds an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars and is author of three book-length collections of poetry. Since 2003, she has blogged as The Velveteen Rabbi; in 2008, TIME named her blog one of the top-25 sites on the internet. She serves Congregation Beth Israel, a Reform-affiliated congregation in western Massachusetts.

# The Basics: How to Conduct a Spiritual Spring Cleaning

## Hametz

## Kitniyot

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Metal pots and pans and utensils are cleaned by:

Baking dishes and grills are cleaned by:

Counter tops, ovens, and other spaces are cleaned by:

The following cannot be cleaned for Passover:

# Kadeish Ur'hatz: The Order of the Seder

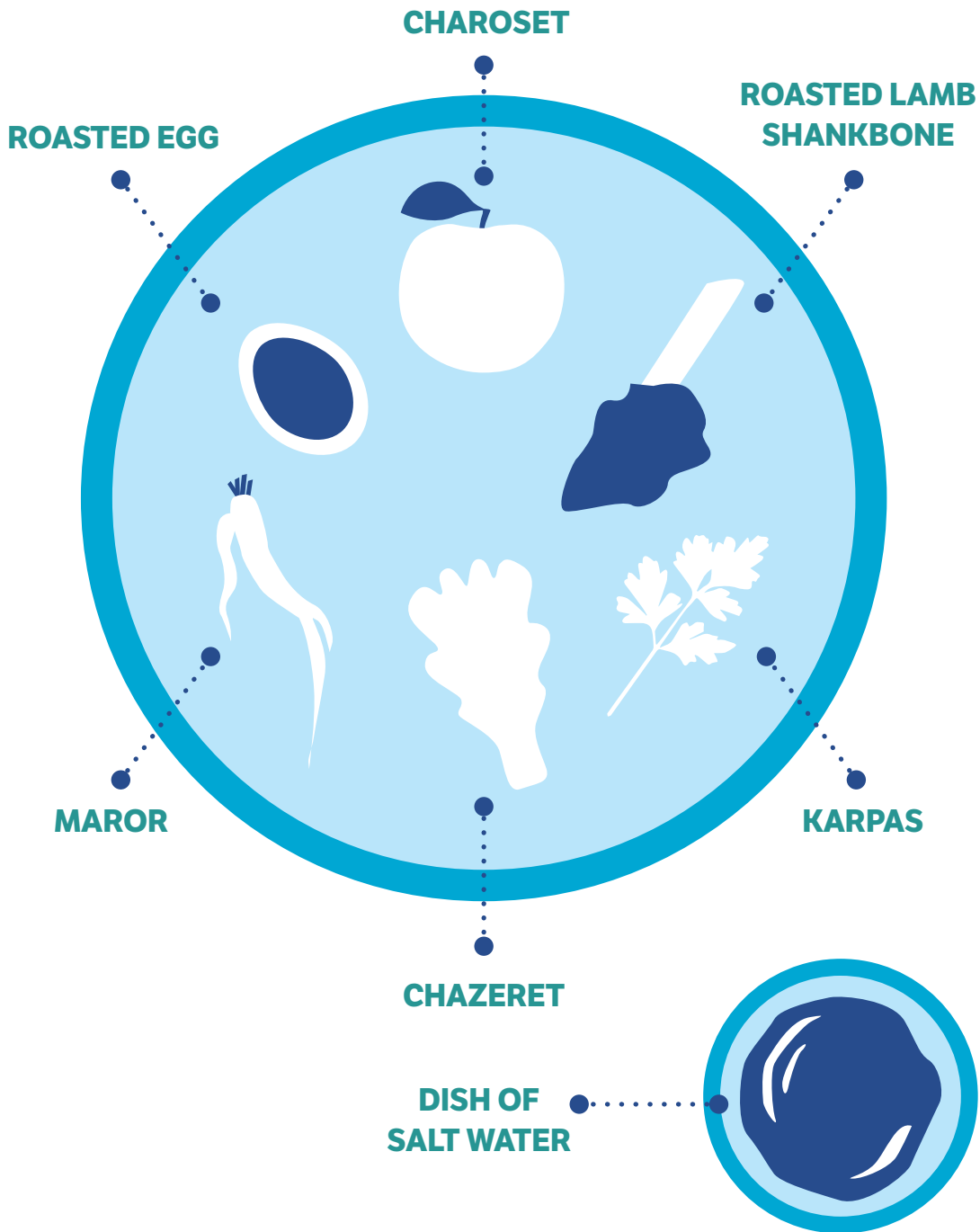
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- קדש **Kadeish** - Bless the Wine
  - ורחץ **Ur'hatz** - Wash Your Hands
  - כרפס **Karpas** - Dip the Green Vegetable
  - יחץ **Yahatz** - Break the Middle Matzah
  - מגיד **Maggid** - Tell the Story
  - רחצה **Rahtzah** - Wash Your Hands
  - מוציא מצה **Motzi Matzah** - Eat the Matzah
  - מרור **Maror** - Eat the Bitter Herb
  - כורף **Korekh** - Make a “Hillel Sandwich”
  - שלקו עורף **Shulhan Orekh** - Eat Dinner
  - צפון **Tzafun** - Find the Afikomen
  - ברך **Barekh** - Say Grace
  - הלל **Hallel** - Songs of Praise
  - נרצה **Nirtzah** - Conclusion
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# The Seder Plate

"On Passover, Jews eat history."

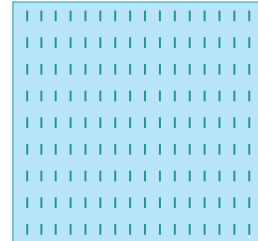
Israel Zangwill (1864-1926)



# More Items for the Seder Table

## Matzah

The unleavened cracker bread that is the central symbol of Passover. Matzah commemorates the rush in which the Israelites left slavery, not even taking time to allow their bread to rise. So too, when faced with the opportunity of liberation, we should rush to grab it and not let it slip through our fingers.



## Haggadah

The book that we use to conduct the Passover seder. There are thousands of haggadot in print to choose from, and many families elect to create their own.

## Elijah's Cup

A cup of wine placed on the Seder table for Elijah the Prophet, who is traditionally thought to visit each home on Passover and we hope will signal the coming of the Messiah and a universal era of peace.

## Afikomen

From the Greek word for “dessert.” The final piece of matzah eaten at the Passover Seder, traditionally hidden at the start of the meal and found by the children and ransomed back to the leader at the end.

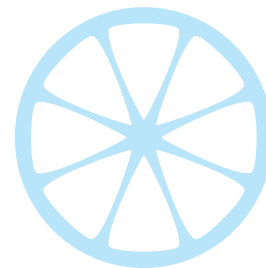
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## Miriam's Cup

A recent addition to the Passover table. Today, many families put out a cup of water commemorating the miracle of Miriam's well, which followed the sister of Moses throughout the desert to provide the people with water. This, and other new customs honoring women's contributions to Jewish history, are part of an ongoing effort to reclaim the place of women in Jewish life.

## Orange

The new custom of putting an orange on the Seder plate was suggested by Susannah Heschel in the 1980s as a way of calling attention to the exclusion of LGBTQ people from Jewish life. It has become a symbol for all marginalized groups — women, LGBTQ folks, Jews by Choice and others — who seek to have their place at the table.



# Exodus and Revolution

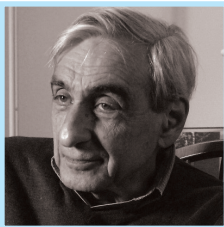
... We still believe — or many of us do — what the Exodus first taught, or what it has commonly been taken to teach, about the meaning and possibility of politics and about its proper form:

**1) Wherever you are, it's probably Egypt.**

**2) There is a better place, a world more attractive, a Promised Land.**

**3) The only way to this Promised Land is through the wilderness. There is no way to get there except by joining together and marching.**

Professor Michael Walzer  
Exodus and Revolution (1985)



Michael Walzer is Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University. He is the author of many books on political theory, including *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977) and *Exodus and Revolution* (1985). The latter was born out of an experience the author had in 1960, when he visited a church in Montgomery, Alabama and heard a sermon on the Exodus and the struggle for civil rights that stuck with him for the next 25 years.



**What elements of your life/your city/your country/your world do you see as “Egyptian“?**

**What's your vision for a Promised Land?**

**Who are your marching partners?**

# Get Liberated: 10 Ways to Host Amazing Seders

## ■ Serve good wine

There is nothing in the Talmud that states that kosher wine has to taste like cough syrup. Explore delicious varietals from Israel, California, Argentina, South Africa, and Australia. Four cups should be a pleasure, not a pain.

## ■ Give assignments ahead of time

Ask people to come ready to share their family's immigration story, a memento for a long journey, or a reflection on a particular part of the seder. Everyone appreciates having homework!

## ■ Offer lots of appetizers

Expand on the idea of karpas and start the seder out by serving a variety of appetizers and dips. Veggies in ranch, artichokes in hollandaise, french fries in ketchup — starting a seder with a full stomach means people will stop checking their watches.

## ■ Make your own Haggadah

There are hundreds of haggadot in print, but the most special will always be the one you make yourself. Use resources like Haggadot.com to piece together traditional texts, modern reflections, funny songs, and serious meditations.

## ■ Cook fantastic food

The challenge of cooking for Passover can bring out the Top Chef in anyone. Explore dishes from different cultures, jazz up old favorites, and show off your culinary skills. And if you don't have any, cater.

## ■ Decorate your house

Serve the meal sitting on pillows in the living room, like you are in a desert tent. Have a swath of blue cloth by the doorway so participants have to “walk through the sea” to arrive at your table.

## ■ Beat each other with onions

Follow the Sephardic custom of reenacting slavery by whipping your neighbors with green onions during the singing of Dayenu. Avoid the eyes.

## ■ Make it relevant

The Passover story of the struggle for justice and freedom is both timeless and timely. Expand the discussion to not just talk about what was oppressive 3000 years ago, but about what injustice still looks like today and how we can fight it.

## ■ Involve the kids

The Passover Seder is first and foremost a way of passing down our most important story to our children. Get them involved with songs, skits, games, or (if you dare) water guns full of salt water.

## ■ Invite someone new

The Torah says we left Egypt as a “mixed multitude.” Mix it up by inviting a diverse group of people to your seder table. Jews and non-Jews, experts and newbies, old friends and new. Let all who are hungry come and eat!

# Additional Readings

## Books

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There are hundreds, if not thousands, of haggadot to choose from. Noam Zion's are our perennial favorites. Full of beautiful illustrations, basic how-to instructions, and detailed commentaries, these haggadot have everything you need for a lifetime of great Seders:

- Noam Zion & David Dishon, *A Different Night: A Family Participation Haggadah*.
- Mishael Zion & Noam Zion, *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices*

There is also a "Leader's Guide" to each of these haggadot, to help you host your own memorable and meaningful seders, and a "Compact Edition" for those who want something simpler for beginners.

- Jonathan Safran Foer & Nathan Englander, *The New American Haggadah*  
A truly beautiful haggadah produced by two of America's contemporary literary voices. Probably too expensive to have enough copies for everyone at your seder, but a wonderful resource for your shelf.
- Ron Wolfson, *Passover: The Family Guide to Spiritual Celebration*  
This book sets out clearly the observances and laws relating to passover, as well as a step-by-step guide for leaders and participants finding their way through the rituals.
- Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*  
A powerful supplement to the Passover haggadah, Walzer looks at the ways different social movements have envisioned their struggles in terms of the Exodus from Egypt.

## Websites

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- *Haggadot.com* ([haggadot.com](http://haggadot.com))  
An open source, community resource for creating meaningful seders by crafting personalized, creative, and relevant haggadot for your Passover table. Created by the designer of the book you hold in your hands right now!