

Essay on passover

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Passover – is one of the most important holidays in the Jewish calendar. This spring festival begins on the eve of the 15th day of Nisan of the Jewish lunar calendar with the sundown and is celebrated for seven days in Israel and for eight days out of its frontiers. This holiday has been celebrated every year for centuries and its history dates back to biblical times. According to Goodman, celebration of Passover is associated with certain traditions and is aimed to honor the memory of those Jews who ventured on decisive action and were released from slavery in Egypt, after which were forced to wander in the desert in search of the land of the Covenant for 40 years (132).

Historical background of Passover

This holiday marks not only liberation of the Jews from Egypt by the God, but also the beginning of the existence of the Jews as a nation. It is mentioned for the first time in the second book of Torah, Exodus. Pharaoh enslaved the descendants of Jacob, who lived in Egypt, and decided to kill all their male babies. One of the Jewish infants, Moses, was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him.

When Moses grew up, one day he accidentally noticed an Egyptian taskmaster brutally beat a Jewish slave. Unable to endure that insult, Moses killed the overseer. Pharaoh, having heard that, determined to put Moses to death, however the later managed to go on the run away from Egypt.

Many years have passed since, and the God called Moses from his hiding for the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. When Pharaoh refused to listen to a Moses` plea for the release of the Jews, the God had sent ten plagues on Egypt, the latter of which was particularly brutal: in every Egyptian family the firstborn son was destined to die in revenge for the

murder of Jewish babies.

The day before the killing of the firstborn, Moses commanded the Jews to slaughter a lamb (an animal, being formerly one of the gods of Egypt) to make with its blood a mark on the door of their houses. The angel of death by that mark was able to recognize that the Jews lived there, and “passed over” (in Hebrew – pesach) their homes in his search for the first-born kids. Being informed of the tenth plague, the Pharaoh got scared and said that the Jewish slaves were free to leave. They left Egypt so quickly that they did not have time to wait till the bread dough rise enough, and baked bread with that dough. As a result, the Jews abandoned Egypt in a great hurry with flat unleavened bread, which became known as matzo. Since then, the Jews celebrate this holiday eating matzo, which, among other things, means that it is better to be free and feed poorly than to live in slavery, and eat good bread.

Celebrating Passover after the Exodus

For almost 12 centuries after the exodus the main ritual of Passover was immolation of lambs in the Temple in Jerusalem in memory of the slaughter at the last day in Egypt. The priest butchered a lamb, part of which was sacrificed, and the rest of it was given to the family as a main dish of a festive meal, “Seder”. During that meal, children and their parents had discussions about the exodus, following the instructions of the Torah that the parents need to tell the children the story of the liberation of the Jews by God. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, the Jews did not sacrifice animals any longer. But the “Seder” till today recalls to mind of adherents the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

Traditions of celebrating Passover nowadays

Grain products are banned for all eight days of celebration (seven days in Israel). A week before Passover, a house is thoroughly cleaned up; whole-wheat bread and different chametz (yeast products) are got rid of. Chametz – means meals containing fermented flour (bread, cakes, muffins), and also containing dough made of wheat, oats, rye, barley, etc. (Pelaia, “ Passover (Pesach)”). Whiskey and other alcoholic beverages made of fermented grains are also prohibited.

In the evening at the eve of Passover the ceremony so much beloved by children “ Bedikas chametz” (“ search for chametz”) is taking place. Even in houses mounted with electricity every family member is provided with a spark for this quest (to avoid fire, some families use the lights). Usually by that time, an apartment is already cleaned up from leaven, and prior to the searches a father hides in different rooms 10 slices of bread. Children find and collect them in a bag. The next morning, these bags along with other chametz is burned on an open fire.

Of all the holidays it is the most troublesome one for the Jewish housewife. A thorough house cleaning, preparations of utensils and of different appliances require a lot of hassle. In recent years, wealthy Jews prefer to spend this holiday in the kosher hotels. In Israel, in connection with the revival of Jewish agriculture, Passover gained again an importance of the spring festival.

Conclusion

Passover is a central Jewish holiday commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. Traditions that take the roots from remote ages are strictly followed by all generations of the Jews, and every peculiarity of this festival fills the seven

days in a year with a special charm that cannot be repeated on any ordinary day of the Jewish calendar.

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