

Learning about the Passover Seder

By Beth Herrinton-Hodge

As families share an evening meal, they can learn about the foods and prayers used during the Seder, the meal that Jewish people eat at the beginning of Passover. Jesus and the disciples gathered to celebrate Passover at the meal Christians call the Last Supper (see Luke 22:7-20), the meal commemorated on Maundy Thursday.

For

Young family

Season

Spring, during Holy Week

Needed

Bible, large plate, prepared *charoset* (see Seder Information worksheet below), bowl of salted water, fresh parsley sprigs, one hard-boiled egg, prepared horseradish, 3 pieces of *matzah* (available in many grocery stores), grape juice, small cups, cloth napkin, 2 candles in holders, lighter or matches, Seder Information and Passover Script worksheets given below, food for the family's evening meal

Prepare in Advance

Prepare *charoset* according to recipe on Seder Information worksheet.

Arrange food items, except *matzah*, on a large plate.

Wrap 3 pieces of *matzah* in a cloth napkin.

Activity Plan

1. Work as a family to prepare the foods, boiling the egg, washing the parsley, wrapping the *matzah*, or mixing the *charoset*.
2. Work together to prepare an evening meal to eat as a family.
3. Place the large plate with Seder foods, *matzah*, grape juice, and a small cup for each person on the table where you will eat your meal. Set the table with dishes and silverware for your meal. Place the two candles and lighter/matches at one end of the table.
4. When all is prepared, gather the family around the table. Open your Bible and read aloud Luke 22:7-15 or use the text printed below. Explain that this meal took place the night before Jesus was crucified and is sometimes called The Last Supper. Passover was important to Jesus and the disciples, who were Jewish. We can learn more about Passover, which is still very important to Jewish families in our time. Option: If your family has friends who are Jewish, invite them to join you for dinner and tell you about Passover.
5. Tell how Passover recalls the story of how God led the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt. The story of the first Passover is told in the Bible, in Exodus 12. Members of the family have different roles in the meal, and children ask questions about their Jewish faith. In Jewish families, the celebration of Passover is a way to teach about the Jewish faith.
6. Tell how the foods eaten during the Passover Seder meal represent different parts of the story. Point out the foods on the large plate. Explain what they are, referring to "Some Seder Foods" on the Seder Information worksheet below.



7. Follow the directions on the Passover Script worksheet below to learn about some parts of the Seder meal, being sure to emphasize that this activity is not the same as an actual Jewish Seder meal.
8. After the meal, invite family members to tell what they have learned about Passover.

Jesus and the Disciples Celebrate Passover

Luke 22:7-15

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹ They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰ He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹ and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹² And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."

¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Passover Is Instituted

Exodus 12:1-14

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

⁷ "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰ And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.



Seder Information

Charoset Recipe

2 medium apples, finely chopped
½ cup chopped nuts*
2 Tablespoons grape juice or honey
½ teaspoon cinnamon

*to make the recipe to be nut-free, use ½ cup uncooked oatmeal

Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Results will be a lumpy mixture, resembling mortar.

Some Seder Foods

Maror: bitter herbs like horseradish and a bowl of salt water to represent the bitter lives of the Hebrew people and the tears of the Hebrew slaves.

Karpas : sweet greens, such as parsley, to symbolize life and renewed hope.

Beyetzah: hard-boiled egg brought by the Jewish people to the Temple in Jerusalem as a sacrificial offering to mark the Passover festival.

Charoset : mixture of apples, cinnamon, honey, and nuts to represent the mortar used by Hebrew slaves in Egypt as they built Pharaoh's buildings.

Matzah: unleavened bread to represent the bread that did not have time to rise before baking when the Hebrew slaves fled Egypt.

For additional, family-friendly information:

- *The Passover Seder*, by Emily Sper, Cartwheel Books, Scholastic, Inc., 2003; [Scholastic Books](#)
- [Website about Passover](#)



Passover Script

Gather the family at the table for the evening meal.

The mother or other adult lights the two candles and says,
“Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe, who commands us to light the Passover lights.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has kept us in life, and has preserved us, and has enabled us to reach this season.”

Each person pours a little grape juice in a cup. Before drinking it, the father or other adult says:
“Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe, and Creator of the fruit of the vine.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who chose us out of all the people and made us holy by the Commandments.
You, O Lord, give us feast days for joy. This feast of Passover marks our freedom and honors our escape from Egypt.”

Each person drinks a cup of grape juice. The cups are refilled.

The father or other adult dips a sprig of parsley in the bowl of salted water and says,
“Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe, Creator of the fruits of the earth.
We dip our *karpas* into salt water to remember the tears shed in slavery by the Hebrew people.”

Each person dips their parsley in the salt water and eats it.

The father or other adult unwraps the *matzah* from the napkin, and breaks one piece in half. One of these pieces is wrapped in a napkin. The youngest child takes the wrapped *matzah* and hides it from the rest of the family.

The father or other adult holds the remaining *matzah* and says,
“This is the unleavened bread which our Jewish ancestors ate in a hurry, before they left Egypt. We eat this bread tonight to mark the Passover event. We remember what God does for us in leading us to freedom.”

The children ask the four questions about why Passover is celebrated.
Child’s Question One: “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

Adult answers: “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and God saved us with a mighty hand. If God had not delivered us, we, our children and our grandchildren, would still be slaves in Egypt. We tell the story of our exit from Egypt. We set aside this night each year to remember the great things God did for us.”

Child’s Question Two: “On all other nights, we eat bread. Why do we only eat *matzah* on Passover?”

Adult answers: “*Matzah* reminds us that the Hebrew people were in a hurry when they left Egypt. They didn’t have time to let their bread rise before baking it. The unleavened bread was flat like hard crackers.”

Child’s Question Three: “On all other nights, we eat many kinds of vegetables and herbs. Why on this night do we only eat bitter herbs?”

Adult answers: “Bitter herbs remind us of the bitter lives the Hebrew people lived under Pharaoh while they were slaves in Egypt.”

Child’s Question Four: “On all other nights, we don’t dip one food into another. Why do we dip our foods tonight?”

Adult answers: “We dip bitter herbs and *charoset* to remind us how hard the Hebrew slaves worked in Egypt. *Charoset* reminds us of the mortar used for making bricks. The parsley in salt water reminds us that spring is here and new life will grow after bitterness.”

An adult reads aloud Exodus 12:1–14.

The second cup of grape juice is raised in a toast, saying,
“We give thanks, praise, and blessing to God who did all these miracles, who brought us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from darkness to light. Let us praise God with a Hallelujah!”

All say, “Hallelujah!” and drink their cup of grape juice. The cups are refilled.



The father or other adult breaks the *matzah* and gives a piece to each family member, then leads a prayer. "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe who commands us to eat the unleavened bread."

Everyone eats a bite of *matzah*.

The father or other adult spreads a bit of horseradish on a piece of *matzah*, then passes the herb to family members to do the same.

A prayer is said, "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe, who commands us to eat the bitter herbs."

Everyone eats the *matzah* and horseradish.

The father or other adult spreads a piece of *matzah* with *charoet* and invites others to do the same. Everyone eats the *matzah* and *charoet*.

At this time, the family eats their evening meal.

Following the meal, family members search for the hidden piece of *matzah*. Some families give a gift to the person who finds it. Everyone eats a piece of the *afikoman*.

The father or other adult invites the family to pray, "Let us say the blessing."
The family prays together, "May the name of the Lord be blessed now and forever. Blessed be our God, whose food we have eaten and in whose goodness we live."

Following the meal, the mother or other adult extinguishes the candles and says, "Go in peace."

