

26.1 Passover

Back to themes

Back to Spring

Preparation

Download and print the following 11 events in Moses' life.

The story of Moses and the Israelites leaving Egypt is remembered by Jewish people all over the world. The Jewish festival of Pesach or Passover is a festival that takes place every year around March or April. **Ask for volunteers to freeze frame or act out events from the story of Moses. Give volunteers one of the 11 events printed as part of the preparation for this assembly to act out. Make sure no one else can see what is written on the page. Can the audience guess which part of the story it is?**

1. Moses is born
2. Moses is rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter
3. Moses grows up in the Egyptian palace
4. Moses kills an Egyptian guard
5. Moses runs away
6. Moses marries Jethro's daughter, Zipporah
7. Moses finds a bush on fire, but not burning
8. Moses is asked by God to rescue the Israelites from Egypt
9. Moses returns to Egypt and is joined by Aaron
10. Moses tells Pharaoh to let the Israelites go
11. Pharaoh refuses to let the people go even after 9 different plagues

For many Jews the Passover is one of the most important festivals in the year. Not all Jews will celebrate the Passover in exactly the same way but we are going to look back at the story of the Passover and how it has influenced some Jewish traditions that take



place today. Can anyone tell me what the Jewish holy book is called? The Torah is the first part of the Jewish holy book called the Tanakh. The Torah contains five books that some Jews and Christians believe were written by Moses. They are often called the 'Books of Moses' and they are the first five books that make up the Jewish and Christian holy books. The story of the Passover is in the second book called Exodus.

Either read the paragraph below and/or ask for 11 pupils to hold up the events printed as part of the preparation for this assembly, not in the correct order, and ask the audience to order the story correctly.

The book of Exodus starts with the birth of Moses and describes how Moses was rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter and grew up in the Egyptian palace. It explains that Moses killed an Egyptian guard trying to defend an Israelite slave. Moses ran away to Midian, where he met Jethro and Jethro's daughter, Zipporah. Moses and Zipporah married and they had two sons. Whilst tending Jethro's sheep, Moses found a bush that was on fire but not burning. God spoke to Moses from within the bush and told him that he would rescue the Israelites from Egypt. Moses made excuses as to why it shouldn't be him that God should use. Eventually Moses made his way



back to Egypt. He and his brother, Aaron, stood before Pharaoh and asked him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refused, Egypt received nine plagues, but after each, Pharaoh still refused to let the Israelites go.

All of this leads us onto the events of the Passover. Exodus explains that God gave instructions to Moses about a meal the Israelites had to prepare and eat on the night that the 10th plague killed all the first born sons of Egypt. Specially selected lambs were slaughtered for the meal and God commanded that some of the lambs' blood be painted onto the door posts so that the plague would 'pass over' the Israelite homes.

God commanded the Israelites to remember this event by celebrating the festival of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread is bread that is made without yeast. Unleavened bread doesn't need time to rise and so is quicker to make. The Israelites hadn't much time as the Pharaoh sent the Israelites away after the 10th plague. They were in a hurry to leave.

The book of Exodus includes the command God gave the Israelites to hold the festival, which is called Pesach or Passover. If I read the command, can you try and answer three questions: 1) How long is the festival? 2) What must be eaten? 3) What do you think happens to the yeast before the festival?

"Celebrate this Festival of Unleavened Bread, for it will remind you that I brought your forces out of the land of Egypt on this very day. This festival will be a permanent law for you; celebrate this day from generation to generation. The bread you eat must be made without yeast from the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. During those seven days, there must be no trace of yeast in your homes." Exodus 12:17-19a (NLT)

How long is the festival? What must be eaten? What do you think happens before

the festival starts? Before the festival of Passover, many Jewish families will give their house a thorough clean and tidy. Can you guess what they may also be searching for? All traces of yeast or 'leaven' or 'chametz' is removed from the home. Some Jews may temporarily sell their chametz or even sell the utensils that they use to prepare food with chametz. Some websites allow you to sell your chametz before each Passover. During the festival of Passover special bread called Matzo is eaten. Matzo is a type of bread made without yeast.

We will explore the traditions of the Passover in this week's thoughts for the day. The story of Moses is one of resilience and can inspire us to bounce back after setbacks or tough times. The opening tradition before the festival, starts the unfolding of the story of the Passover. The festival of Passover is not only a reminder of the importance of individual resilience, but it is a reminder of how a whole nation can bounce back.

Time to reflect

- What actions are linked to the story of the Passover?
- Why do many Jewish families clean the house before Passover? Why?
- What traditions do you or your family have?
- Do you know why you do them?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. (Amen)



26.2 The Fast Of The Firstborn

Back to themes

Back to Spring

There are many activities that we all do that link us to stories in the past. In the story of the Passover, all the first-born males of Egypt including the animals died as a result of the tenth plague. The first-born sons of the Israelites were saved from the tenth plague because they painted lambs blood on the door posts of their houses. The plague passed over them. God gave a specific command to the Israelites leaving Egypt that would continually remind them that the first-born sons of the Israelites were saved.

Many first-born sons of Jewish families will go without food on the day before the first day of the festival. Fathers of baby boys who are too young to fast, may fast instead. This has become known as the 'fast of the firstborn'. It is a reminder that God rescued the first born Jewish males during the events of the first Passover.

Time to reflect

- Why do some first born male Jews fast on the day before the Passover starts?
- Who here is a first-born male in their family? A boy with an older sister wouldn't be expected to fast.
- What traditions do you think links you to the past?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



26.3 The Seder Meal

Back to themes

Back to Spring

In the book of Exodus, God tells Moses "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Exodus 12:24-27

During the festival of Passover, many Jewish families share a special meal called the Seder meal. The meal re-enacts the events of Passover. The word Seder means 'order'. Rituals, words and foods are done, said or eaten in a certain order. The order helps the family to remember the story of the Passover? Many Jews follow the order of the Haggadah, which means 'telling' and is a book that breaks the Seder meal into fourteen steps guiding the family through the story and meaning of the Passover.

Time to reflect

- What festivals do you and your family celebrate?
- What foods are important in your celebrations?
- What actions are important in your celebrations?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



26.4 Matzo

Back to themes

Back to Spring

"In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day." Exodus 12:17

Food is a very important part of the Passover celebrations. The Passover meal contains certain foods that are a direct reminder of the Israelite slaves in Egypt, the 10th plague and God's rescue plan for the Jewish people.

Can you guess what these foods or items represent or why they are eaten?

Matzo or unleavened bread – a command to make bread without yeast to represent the Israelites hurrying to leave Egypt

A bone of a lamb – to represent lamb eaten on the first Passover meal.

An **egg** – the egg can represent new life and new beginnings. An egg may represent sacrifice. Lots of foods go soft when cooked but an egg hardens representing the Israelites' resilience under pressure.

Green vegetable (usually lettuce) – represents new life.

Salt water – represents a slave's tears.

Four cups of wine – God promised freedom to the Israelites four times.

Charoset (a paste made of apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine) – represents the cement used by the Israelites slaves.

Time to reflect

- Can you think of foods that are eaten on special occasions?
- Are there any other foods that you can think of that represent an event?
- Is the Seder meal the only meal that recreates events from history?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



26.5 Four Questions

Back to themes

Back to Spring

The Haggadah contains songs, prayers as well as four questions that are said during the Seder meal.

Question 1: Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzo, but on this night, we eat only matzo?

Answer: Matzo is the name of bread made without yeast, made in a hurry by the Israelites leaving Egypt.

Question 2: Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat only bitter herbs?

Answer: The bitter herbs are a reminder of the bitter times of slavery.

Question 3: Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night we dip them twice?

Answer: Potatoes, onions or other vegetables are dipped in salt water, a reminder of the tears. A paste made of nuts and paste is also used as a reminder of the cement used to make the bricks in Egypt.

Question 4: Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat in a reclining position?

Answer: Reclining and relaxing is a reminder of freedom and how royalty would have eaten their meals.

Many of the actions, rituals, foods and words

that are done and said during the Passover and the Seder meal act as a practical reminder of an event that is very important in the history of the Jewish people. There is a Chinese proverb that goes: Tell me and I will forget, show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand. The Passover is one of many festivals that doesn't just retell the story it involves those who celebrate it.

Time to reflect

- How does the Passover involve those who celebrate it?
- How involved are you in the festivals or events that you celebrate?
- Are those involved in St David's Day or St George's Day parades and events much more likely to understand the history of those days compared to those who just hear about them in a school assembly?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*

