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## PASSOVER

**Passover**, also called **Pesach** (/ˈpɛsɑːx, ˈpeɪ/; <sup>[2]</sup> **Hebrew**: פֶּסַח *Pesach*), is a major [Jewish holiday](#) that occurs on the 15th day of the [Hebrew month](#) of [Nisan](#), the first month of [Aviv](#), or spring. The word *Pesach* or *Passover* can also refer to the [Korban Pesach](#), the paschal lamb that was offered when the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) stood, to the [Passover Seder](#), the ritual meal on Passover night, or to the Feast of [Unleavened Bread](#). One of the biblically ordained [Three Pilgrimage Festivals](#), Passover is traditionally celebrated in the [Land of Israel](#) for seven days and for eight days among many Jews in the [Diaspora](#), based on the concept of *yom tov sheni shel galuyot*.

As recounted in the [Book of Exodus](#), God commands [Moses](#) to tell the Israelites to mark a lamb's blood above their doors in order that the [Angel of Death](#) will pass over them (i.e., that they will not be touched by the [death of the firstborn](#)). Pharaoh orders the Israelites to leave, taking whatever they want, and asks Moses to bless him in the name of the Lord. The passage goes on to state that the passover sacrifice recalls the time when the LORD "passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt".<sup>[3]</sup> This story is recounted at the passover meal in the form of the [Haggadah](#), in fulfillment of

the command "And thou shalt tell (Higgadata) thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt." ([Exodus 13:8](#))

The [wave offering](#) of [barley](#) was offered at [Jerusalem](#) on the second day of the festival. The [counting of the sheaves](#) is still practiced, for seven weeks until the [Feast of Weeks](#) on the 50th day, the Pentecost.

Nowadays, in addition to the biblical prohibition of owning [leavened foods](#) for the duration of the holiday, the Passover Seder is one of the most widely observed rituals in Judaism.

The [Hebrew](#) פֶּסַח is rendered as [Tiberian \[pesaħ\]](#) (ⓘ<sup>ⓘ</sup> [listen](#)), and [Modern Hebrew](#): [ˈpesax] *Pesach*, *Pesakh*. The verb *pasàch* (פָּסַח) is first mentioned in the [Torah](#)'s account of [the Exodus](#) from Egypt ([Exodus 12:23](#)), and there is some debate about its exact meaning. The commonly held assumption that it means "He passed over" ([נִסָּךְ](#)), in reference to God "passing over" (or "skipping") the houses of the Hebrews during the final of the Ten [Plagues of Egypt](#), stems from the translation provided in the [Septuagint](#) (παρελευσεται [[Greek](#): *pareleusetai*]) in [Exodus 12:23](#), and εσκεπασεν [[Greek](#): *eskepasen*] in [Exodus](#)

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[12:27](#)). [Targum Onkelos](#) translates *pesach* as *ve-yeiħos* ([Hebrew](#): וַיִּהְיוּ *ve-yēħōs*) "he had pity" coming from the Hebrew root חָנַן meaning to have pity.<sup>[4]</sup> Cognate languages yield similar terms with distinct meanings, such as "make soft, soothe, placate" ([Akkadian](#) *passahu*), "harvest, commemoration, blow" ([Egyptian](#)), or "separate" ([Arabic](#) *fsh*).<sup>[5]</sup>

The term *Pesach* ([Hebrew](#): פֶּסַח *Pesach*) may also refer to the [lamb](#) or [goat](#) which was designated as the Passover sacrifice (called the [Korban Pesach](#) in Hebrew). Four days before the Exodus, the Hebrews were commanded to set aside a lamb ([Exodus 12:3](#)), and inspect it daily for blemishes. During the day on the 14th of Nisan, they were to slaughter the animal and use its blood to mark their [lintels and door posts](#). Before midnight on the 15th of Nisan they were to consume the lamb.

The English term "Passover" is first known to be recorded in the [English language](#) in [William Tyndale](#)'s translation of the Bible,<sup>[6]</sup> later appearing in the [King James Version](#) as well. It is a literal translation of the Hebrew term.<sup>[7]</sup> In the King

James Version, Exodus 12:23 reads:

For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door,

and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

## ORIGINS

The Passover ritual is widely thought to have its origins in an [apotropaic](#) rite, unrelated to [the Exodus](#), to ensure the protection of a family home, a rite conducted wholly within a clan.<sup>[9]</sup> [Hyssop](#) was employed to daub the blood of a slaughtered sheep on the lintels and door posts to ensure that demonic forces could not enter the home.<sup>[10]</sup>

A further hypothesis maintains that, once the [Priestly Code](#) was promulgated, the Exodus narrative took on a central function, as the apotropaic rite was, arguably, amalgamated with the [Canaanite](#) agricultural festival of spring which was a ceremony of [unleavened bread](#), connected with the barley harvest. As the Exodus motif grew, the original function and symbolism of these double origins was lost.<sup>[11]</sup> Several motifs replicate the features associated with the [Mesopotamian Akitu](#) festival.<sup>[12]</sup> Other scholars, [John Van Seters](#), [J.B.Segal](#) and Tamara Prosic disagree with the merged two-festivals hypothesis.