

# Passover Themes

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Source:

Passover is a holiday with many different themes. This breadth ensures that no two seders will ever be exactly alike and encourages each of us to engage equally, whether this is the first or hundredth seder you've attended. It also challenges each of us to connect to the seder on a personal, individual level. The themes offered are just a sampling, what other themes are you drawn to?

Redemption: In the Exodus story, the Jews were redeemed physically from slavery. While Pesach is "z'man heyruiteinu," the season of our freedom, it is also a festival that speaks of spiritual redemption. Jews were freed from mental as well as physical slavery. It was as a physically and spiritually free people that the Jewish nation prepared to receive the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The seder also includes many allusions to a future messianic redemption. One of the clearest symbols is the Cup of Elijah placed on every seder table. Contained within the salvation from Egypt are the seeds of future redemption, as the Torah states, "This same night is a night of watching unto the Lord for all the children of Israel throughout their generations" (Exodus 12:42).

Creation: Passover is known by several names in Hebrew, including Chag HaAviv, holiday of the spring. Pesach celebrates spring, rebirth, and renewal, symbolized by the green "*karpas*" and the egg on the seder plate. It is also a time of "beginning," as exemplified by the first grain harvest and the birth of Israel as a nation. Also, Nissan, this Hebrew month, was traditionally seen as the first month of the Jewish year.

Education: Four different times in the Torah, the Jews are commanded to repeat the story of the Passover (Exodus 12:26, 13:8, 14; Deuteronomy 6:20). The seder is centered around teaching the story of the exodus from Egypt. In fact, Haggadah means "the telling." Two of the most important readings address education head on: the four questions and the four sons. The first encourages even the youngest children to begin asking questions, while the latter instructs us how to respond to different learning styles. Even at a seder without children present, the night takes on an educational feel. Thought provoking questions and supportive debate are encouraged.

Patterns of Four: Throughout the seder, you may notice the number four being repeated in many guises. This is based on the verse in Exodus that states, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments, and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God..." (Exodus 6:6-7). Among many other patterns of four at the seder, we drink four cups of wine, ask four questions, and speak about four types of children.