

visual guide to the passover

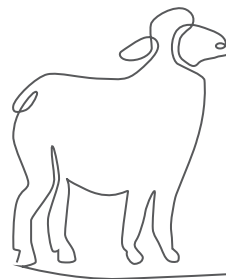
The Passover is a symbolic meal that has been celebrated in Judaism for thousands of years. It commemorates the moment God's people were rescued from slavery in Egypt. Each of the elements on a traditional passover plate represents a piece of that story. By sharing in this meal, each new generation sees themselves reliving the story of the ancestors.

When Jesus stepped onto the scene, he used the meaning of Passover to reinterpret this same story for his disciples. According to Jesus, this meal now points to the new life that can be found through faith in him. Just as the original Passover symbolized the people's escape from slavery, so too the Communion table we celebrate now as Christians represents Jesus' death, which makes it possible for us to be free from the slavery of death and sin in our own lives.



parsley (karpas)

Passover begins with the dipping of the karpas, a vegetable like parsley or lettuce, into salt water as a symbolic way of reliving the story of Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery and dipped his prized coat in blood to convince their father of his death. This story marks the beginning of a larger story about how Abraham's family found themselves in Egypt in the first place (*Gen. 37:12-36*).



passover lamb

JEWISH

The lamb is a staple of the Passover meal. In Egypt, God told the people to kill the lamb and smear its blood on the doorposts of their houses before eating the rest. The blood served as a sign that the people inside that house were faithful to God. When the plague of death swept through Egypt, killing the firstborn children, it passed over the houses marked by blood (*Exod. 12:1-13*).

CHRISTIAN

When Jesus celebrates Passover with his disciples, there is no lamb present on the table. In this way, Jesus makes a powerful statement. He is the passover lamb, whose death takes away the sins of the world and brings life to those who believe (*John 1:29*). It is by his blood that we are rescued.



unleavened bread (matzah)

JEWISH

While preparing to flee from Egypt, the Israelites didn't have hours to wait for yeast to rise to bake bread. They would have to leave at a moment's notice, so they baked flat cakes without yeast (*Exod. 12:14-20*).

CHRISTIAN

Jesus reinterprets the bread as a symbol for his broken body (*Matt. 26:26*). Through his crushing death, we receive life and nourishment. The bread is a core symbol in Communion, the Christian meal where we remember Jesus' sacrifice for us.

cup of wine

JEWISH

During the Passover, adults would drink four cups of wine. There is much debate surrounding exactly what the cups symbolize, from the four words God used to describe the people's liberation from slavery in Egypt (*Exod. 6:6-7*) to the four main redemptive episodes of Jewish history (*Abraham, Exodus, Exile, and the end of days still to come*).

CHRISTIAN

In place of the lamb, Jesus lifts a cup of wine, saying to the gathered disciples, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (*Matt. 26:27-28*). Just like with the original Passover, blood is being shed so the people may find release from slavery and death. Only this time, the blood belongs to Jesus, and his shed blood reminds us that we are now freed from the slavery of sin and death, able to find new life and redemption in Christ.



bitter herbs (maror)

The bitter herb is traditionally just shredded horseradish. The goal of consuming it is to bring tears to your eyes, as a visceral reminder of the bitter toil of God's people while suffering slavery in Egypt (*Exod. 1:8-14*). The bitter herb calls to mind the sorry state of the world, and the desire for God to bring hope and redemption.

