

PESACH/PASSOVER GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following is a list of common Passover-related terms. All noun defined terms are capitalized.

NOTE: There is no single "official" way to transliterate Hebrew words into English. Terms below are commonly accepted (if sometimes inconsistently applied) transliterations. Principal variations concern Hebrew letters that can be spelled in different ways in English. For example, "ch" (similar to the "ch" sound in German but more guttural) versus "h" (e.g. , "Chanukkah" or "Hannukah"); "k" versus "kh" (for a hard "k" sound); "y" versus or in addition to "i."

Pronunciation of many Hebrew words and letters varies between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, a result of separate histories and external cultural influences. Ashkenazim often pronounce words that end with a "t" in Biblical Hebrew with an "s"---e.g. , "Shabbos" for Shabbat, "Matzos" for Matzot, "bris" for brit, etc. Biblical Hebrew also has no vowels (except in certain uses of "a" or *aleph* , *he* , *vav* , and *yod*), which can result in widely differing pronunciations.

Afikoman	Derived from the Greek <i>epikomion</i> or <i>epikomen</i> for "that which comes after," meaning after dinner or "dessert." Part of the middle matzah that is broken and hidden near the beginning of the seder by the <i>ba'al ha-seder</i> or by children who "steal" it, it must be ransomed so it can be eaten and the seder can continue. It represents the <i>Korban Pesach</i> from Temple times.
arba Kosot	Hebrew for "four cups," meaning the four cups of wine or grape juice imbibed during the seder. When drinking the first cup, <i>Sephardim</i> shout " <i>I'chayim!</i> "
arba Kushiyyot	Hebrew for "four questions" or perplexities asked by the youngest child at the seder. See <i>fier Kashes</i> .
Ashkenaz	Biblical term for a country commonly associated with modern-day Germany; refers to Jews or their descendants from the Christian lands of Central and Eastern Europe. <i>Ashkenazi</i> is a Jewish person or adjective relating to something that is "Ashkenazic"; <i>Ashkenazim</i> is plural Hebrew for "Ashkenazic" Jews.
Ba'al ha-Seder	Hebrew for "master of the seder," traditionally an adult male who leads the seder service.
Barekh	Hebrew for "blessing." Step 13 of the seder.
bedikat Chametz	Hebrew for "search for leaven," the ceremonial search for <i>chametz</i> on 14 Nisan, the evening preceding the seder.
Beitzah	Hebrew for "egg"; a roasted (or, more typically, hardboiled) egg placed on the seder plate to represent the <i>Chagigah</i> or "festival offering" that was anciently offered in the Temple in Jerusalem. Also, a Talmudic tractate on festivals.
bentsch Licht	Yiddish for "make benediction over light"; <i>Ashkenazic</i> expression referring to the blessing over candles that begins <i>Shabbat</i> and festivals such as <i>Pesach</i> .
Berakhah	Hebrew for "benediction" or "blessing" (plural: <i>Berakhot</i>); recited in thanks for food, drink, etc., and before performing <i>mitzvot</i> . First tractate of the Talmud on benedictions.
Bikkurim	Hebrew for "first fruits"; offerings from the <i>Shiv'at ha-Minim</i> that were brought to the Temple at <i>Shavuot</i> .
Bi'ur Chametz	Hebrew for "burning of leaven"; the ceremony on the morning preceding the seder where leaven found the night before during the <i>bedikat chametz</i> is burned.
Chag ha-Aviv	Hebrew for "Festival of Spring"; one of the names for Passover.
Chag ha-Matzot	Hebrew for "Feast of Unleavened Bread"; another name for Passover.
Chagigah	Hebrew for "festival"; usually refers to the three required pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot; specifically, the roasted "festival offering" made by each Israelite at the Temple; represented at the seder by the <i>beitzah</i> . Also, the title of a Talmudic tractate on festivals.
Challah	Bread that originally was the priestly portion during Temple times; twisted egg bread eaten at Shabbat and other festivals (except Pesach, where it is definitely un- <i>kosher</i> because it contains chametz); a small portion is burned in remembrance of Temple offerings.
Chametz	Hebrew for "leaven." Anything that contains leaven or is otherwise forbidden during Passover.
Chametzdikhe	Anything that contains <i>chametz</i> and therefore forbidden during Passover.
Charoset	A mixture of fruits, spices, nuts, grape juice/wine, etc., that is intended to look like the mortar used by the Israelite slaves in Egypt to make the pharaoh's bricks; substance into which maror is dipped during the seder. <i>Ashkenazic</i> charoset is often simply made of grated or chopped apples, walnuts, cinnamon, and grape juice, whereas <i>Sephardim</i> often prepare charoset with typical Middle Eastern foods and spices such as dates, figs, almonds, apricots, cardamom, etc.
Chatzeret	Hebrew for "lettuce"; a second bitter herb, usually romaine lettuce (or sometimes celery) used for the Hillel sandwich or <i>Korekh</i> . <i>Chatzeret</i> is sometimes not included on the <i>k'areh</i> .

Chrain daven Dayenu	Yiddish for "horseradish"; commonly the primary or only <i>maror</i> on the <i>k'areh</i> . Ashkenazic term for "to pray." Hebrew for "it is enough" or "it suffices"; a refrain sung or shouted during the seder when recounting the Lord's 15 blessings to the Israelites when leaving Egypt and entering the Promised Land.
Eretz Yisrael	Hebrew for the "Land of Israel."
Erev Pesach	Hebrew for "Passover Eve"; the 14th of Nisan during which final preparations are made for Passover, including the search for, burning, and/or selling of <i>chametz</i> , and when ritual washings occur in a <i>mikveh</i> ; day on which the <i>Korban Pesach</i> was slain at the Temple.
fier Kashes	Yiddish for the <i>arba Kushiyyot</i> .
Gartel	Yiddish for "belt" (from German <i>Gurtel</i> meaning "belt"); ritual belt worn with the <i>kittel</i> .
gefilte Fish	Yiddish for "stuffed fish"; traditional Passover dish.
Gemara	Aramaic for "completion"; texts of rabbinic discussions of <i>Mishnah</i> . <i>Mishnah</i> and <i>Gemara</i> together form the <i>Talmud</i> .
Gorgle	Yiddish for "neck"; often a chicken neckbone placed on the <i>k'areh</i> in place of the <i>zero'ah</i> .
Hagaddah	Hebrew for "the story" or "the telling" (also spelled " <i>Haggadah</i> "; plural: <i>Haggadot</i>); the name of the book accompanying the seder service that includes instructions for the ceremony.
Hallel	Psalms 113-118; recited on Passover and other festivals. Step 14 of the seder.
hekhsher	"Approbation"; designation given on foods by a rabbi certifying that the food is <i>kosher</i> or, even more specifically, <i>kosher</i> for Passover.
heseba	The act of leaning to the left during the seder, a combination of the Hebrew word <i>heysave</i> ("sitting down to a meal") and the Yiddish word <i>bet</i> ("bed"); in other words, reclining during a meal, the manner of eating by freemen during the Roman occupation.
Hillel	Hillel the Elder, who lived during the time of Jesus Christ. Said to be the greatest rabbi of the Second Temple period, Hillel was head of the Sanhedrin.
Kadesh	Hebrew for "sanctify." Step 1 of the seder.
Kadesh Urchatz	Shorthand reference to the 15 steps of the seder; refers to first two steps.
K'areh	The seder plate containing the five or six traditional symbolic foods of Passover.
Karpas	"Green vegetable"; usually parsley (but can be a potato or onion); eaten at seder symbolizing hyssop used to paint the lintels with lambs' blood. Karpas is dipped in salt water (or vinegar). Step 3 of the seder.
kasher	"Fit" or "proper"; the process used to make kitchen and utensils <i>kosher</i> .
Kashrut	Jewish dietary laws. Requirements include: no eating of milk with meat; eating only "clean" animals; eating only birds and mammals that have been ritually slaughtered; avoiding certain parts of otherwise "clean" animals. Requires separate sets of dishes and cooking utensils for milk and meat.
ka-Zayit	A unit of measurement equal in size to an "olive" (plural: <i>ka-zeytim</i>); used during the seder when taking pieces of <i>matzah</i> , <i>maror</i> , and <i>karpas</i> .
Khetuvim	See <i>Torah</i> .
Kippah	Yiddish for "cap" (plural: <i>Kippot</i>); usually refers to a skullcap or <i>yarmulke</i> .
Kitniyot	Foods added to the list of prohibited foods at Passover by <i>Ashkenazim</i> , since they were used as flour substitutes and therefore could contain <i>chametz</i> . Includes legumes, rice, corn, and millet.
Kittel	A white external robe derived from Temple clothing; worn during the seder, on Yom Kippur, by the groom at the wedding, and as a burial shroud; includes a <i>gartel</i> .
Knaydl	A ball made from <i>matzah</i> crumbs (plural: <i>knaydlich</i>).
Kohen	Hebrew for "priest" (plural: <i>Kohenim</i> ; alternatively spelled " <i>Cohen</i> ," " <i>Kahn</i> ," " <i>Kahane</i> ," etc.); literal male descendants of Aaron, the first High Priest of the Aaronic Priesthood.
Korban Pesach	Hebrew for the "Passover sacrifice" and specifically the "Paschal Lamb"; the ritually sacrificed, one-year-old, unblemished male lamb mandated by God in the <i>Torah</i> to be slain at the Temple and eaten on the first night of Passover with <i>matzah</i> and <i>maror</i> .
Korekh	Hebrew for "sandwich"; specifically, the "Hillel sandwich" made of <i>matzah</i> and <i>maror</i> and eaten just before the seder meal. Step 10 of the seder.
Kos Eliyahu	Hebrew for "cup of Elijah"; a cup present at every seder table for the Prophet Elijah, whose promised return is to be during Passover heralding the return of the Messiah.
kosher	"Fit" or "proper"; describes suitability of foods. Made proper through the process of <i>kasher</i> .
kosher le-Pesach	Hebrew for "fit for Passover"; designation of foods that are both <i>kosher</i> and free of <i>chametz</i> ; foods that are <i>kosher</i> for Passover are "double <i>kosher</i> ."
Ladino	From the word "Latin"; refers to the Judeo-Spanish (Castilian) language of <i>Sephardim</i> .

Latke	A potato pancake usually eaten during <i>Chanukkah</i> but also <i>kosher</i> for Passover.
L'chayim	Hebrew for "to life!"; quintessential Jewish toast.
Maggid	Hebrew for "tell." Step 5 of the seder.
Makkot	Hebrew for "strokes"; the ten plagues God inflicted on the Egyptians. Also, a Talmudic tractate on flogging.
Maror	Hebrew for "bitter herb"; a <i>k'areh</i> symbolic food, usually horseradish; a reminder of Egypt where the Israelites were slaves before receiving the Law. Bitter herbs may not be soaked for 24 hours or more; otherwise, they become "cooked" and only uncooked vegetables may be used. Step 9 of the seder.
Matzah	Hebrew for "unleavened bread" (sometimes spelled " <i>matzo</i> "; plural: <i>matzot</i> , <i>matzos</i>); also known as the "bread of affliction." It is specially prepared only from wheat and water quickly enough so that <i>chametz</i> cannot form; it is a <i>mitzvah</i> to eat <i>matzah</i> at the seder. Matzah is always covered whenever the wine is lifted or drunk. At all other times, the matzah is slightly uncovered. Step 8 of the seder.
Matzo brei	"Fried matzah"; matzah that is scrambled with eggs.
mekhirat Chametz	Hebrew for "selling of leaven"; action done on the morning of 14 Nisan. <i>Chametz</i> is sold by members of the community to the rabbi, who in turn sells it to <i>goyim</i> ("non-Jews") for a nominal fee. After Passover, <i>chametz</i> is sold back to the rabbi, who resells it back to the community.
Me'ot Chittim	Hebrew for "wheat money"; money that is raised for the poor before Passover so they can afford <i>matzah</i> for the seder.
Midrash	The rabbinic methods of interpretation of the Bible; stories that expand the bare details of the Bible.
Mikveh	A ritual bath of immersion; required by women and men to become clean. Directly analogous to an LDS baptismal font, although used for somewhat different purposes.
Minhag	Hebrew for "custom" (plural: <i>Minhaggim</i>); includes particular practices in observance of Passover.
Mishnah	Hebrew for "repetition"; the "Oral Law" as opposed to <i>Torah</i> or the "Written Law." <i>Mishnah</i> forms the core of the <i>Talmud</i> .
Mitzrayim	Hebrew for "Egypt" (also spelled " <i>Mizraim</i> "); can also mean "limitation," "boundary," "narrow straits." Symbolically refers to sin or sinfulness.
Mitzvah	Hebrew for "commandment" (plural: <i>Mitzvot</i> ; also means "duty," "obligation," "good deed"). There are 613 commandments, 248 positive ("thou shalt") and 365 negative ("thou shalt not").
Motzi	Hebrew for "blessing." Step 7 of the seder.
Nevi'im	See <i>Torah</i> .
Nirtzah	Hebrew for "acceptance." Step 15 (the final step) of the seder.
Nisan	Babylonian term; the first month of the ecclesiastical year on the Hebrew calendar and the eighth month of the civil year. Called <i>Aviv</i> ("Spring") in the <i>Torah</i> .
Omer	Hebrew for "sheaf"; a measure of barley offered on the second day of Passover in the Temple. The omer period is the 49 days between Passover and <i>Shavuot</i> .
Pareve	Food that is neither meat nor dairy, such as vegetables, fruits, grains, eggs, and fish (also often spelled " <i>parve</i> ").
Paschal	English adjective derived from "Pascha," a Latinized spelling of <i>Pesach</i> or Passover. A term often used in connection with Jesus Christ (e.g., the "Pashal Lamb") or anything relating to Easter.
Pesach	Hebrew for "Passover" (plural: <i>Pesachim</i>). The word can also refer to the paschal sacrifice itself. It is also another name for the shankbone on the <i>k'areh</i> . <i>Pesach</i> is the root in Romance and many Slavic languages for "Easter." Also, a Talmudic tractate on Passover.
Pesachdikhe	Foods and kitchen utensils acceptable for Passover.
Pidyon ha-Ben	Hebrew for "Redemption of the Firstborn"; a ceremony performed on the 31st day after a child's birth; symbolically related to Passover and Christ's redemption.
Rachtzah	Hebrew for "wash." Step 6 of the seder.
Seder	Hebrew for "order"; the ritual Passover meal.
Semikah	Hebrew for "laying on of hands"; ritual action that is performed on 14 Nisan by fathers on children.
Sephard	Biblical term for a country commonly associated with modern-day Spain; refers to Jews or their descendants from the Muslim lands of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. <i>Sephardi</i> is a Jewish person or adjective relating to something that is "Sephardic"; <i>Sephardim</i> is plural Hebrew for "Sephardic" Jews.
Shabbat ha-Gadol	Hebrew for the "Great Sabbath"; the Sabbath before Passover when rabbinic sermons deal with the laws of Passover.

Shavuot	Hebrew for "Feast of Weeks"; one of three required pilgrimage holidays in the Old Testament, it commemorates when God gave the <i>Torah</i> to Israel on Mount Sinai. Following the grain harvest, it always occurs 50 days after Passover. The holiday is directly connected to Christian Pentecost.
Shema	Hebrew for "hear"; the name of Jewish declaration taken from the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The <i>Shema</i> (or <i>Shema Yisrael</i>), said to be the most important prayer in Judaism, is recited twice daily in the morning and evening, at Shabbat service, on one's deathbed, and by Jewish martyrs.
Shemurah	Hebrew for "watched" or "observed"; refers to matzah made from wheat watched from harvest through milling and baking. Orthodox Jews eat only <i>shemurah matzah</i> during Passover.
Shiv'at ha-Minim	Hebrew for the "seven species"; seven fruits and grains enumerated in Deuteronomy 8:8 as special products of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> : wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates (or date honey).
Shulchan Arukh	Hebrew for "prepared table"; the feast at the Passover seder. Step 11 of the seder. Also the title of a famous book, <i>The Code of Jewish Law</i> , by Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488-1575).
Ta'anit Bechorim	Hebrew for "Fast of the Firstborn"; a special fast that commences on the morning of 14 Nisan; required of all firstborn males.
Tallit	Hebrew for "prayer shawl"; fringed garment worn during morning prayers and on special holidays. Technically, the holiday shawl is a <i>Tallit Gadol</i> (large prayer shawl) as opposed to a <i>Tallit Katan</i> (small version, worn by Orthodox men beneath a suit vest). The four corners of the <i>tallit</i> with protruding <i>tzitzit</i> are reminiscent of a covering made of animal skins.
Talmud	Hebrew for "study" or "learning"; discussions and commentaries on the <i>Mishnah</i> of post-Biblical rabbis.
Tanakh	An acronym for <i>T</i> orah, <i>N</i> evi'im, and <i>K</i> hetuvim, the three parts of the Bible. Tanakh is the Hebrew Bible.
Tashlikh	Hebrew for "you shall cast out"; a ceremony on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, in which pockets are emptied of bread crumbs, which are thrown into the sea or a stream of running water. This ceremony is an interesting parallel to the <i>chametz</i> destroyed before Passover---one destroyed by fire, the other by water.
Tefillin	Hebrew for "phylacteries"; two cubical leather boxes containing verses of the <i>Shema Yisrael</i> and other scriptural passages attached to the arm and forehead during prayers; worn as a <i>mitzvah</i> in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:8.
Terefah	Hebrew for "torn"; refers to un- <i>kosher</i> carrion or anything generally that is not <i>kosher</i> .
Torah	Hebrew for "teaching"; the first five Books of Moses in the Bible. Together with the <i>Nevi'im</i> ("prophets") and the <i>Khetuvim</i> ("writings", meaning scrolls and wisdom literature) it comprises the entire Hebrew Bible. See <i>Tanakh</i> .
Trayf	Yiddish for anything that is not <i>kosher</i> . Rabbits (including Easter Bunnies) with their uncloven little padded feet are definitely <i>trayf</i> !
Tzafun	Hebrew for "ransomed"; the act of redeeming the <i>Afikoman</i> which symbolizes the <i>Korban Pesach</i> . Step 12 of the seder.
Tzimmes	Various baked dishes of fruits and vegetables, often made specially for Passover. Also, "to make a fuss."
Tzitzit	Hebrew for "fringes" or "tassels"; elaborately twined and knotted fringes on the four corners of the <i>tallit</i> ; worn as a <i>mitzvah</i> in accordance with Numbers 15:38 and Deuteronomy 22:12.
Urchatz	Hebrew for "wash." Step 2 of the seder.
Yachatz	Hebrew for "divide." Step 4 of the seder.
Yiddish	"Jewish"; Judeo-German language of <i>Ashkenazim</i> ; mostly Germanic with many Hebrew and Slavic additions, it is written in Hebrew letters.
Yizkor	Hebrew for "may God remember"; the opening words to the memorial prayer recited on the last day of Passover and on other special holidays.
Zeman Cherutenu	Hebrew for "Season of Our Freedom"; another name for Passover.
Zemiroth	Hebrew for "songs"; at Passover, there are six traditional table songs that follow the formal end of the seder.
Zero'ah	Hebrew for "arm" (alternatively spelled "Zero'a"); formerly the roasted lamb sacrificed at the Temple in Jerusalem, it is today represented on the <i>k'areh</i> by a roasted lamb's shankbone or other bone or, alternatively, a beet. Lamb is almost never eaten at Passover by observant <i>Ashkenazim</i> today, who also intentionally avoid all roasted meat at Passover.