



## PASSOVER

A CUP FOR ELIJAH AND A WORLD OF HOPE

*A timeless cup that overflows with hope*

# HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

## *Passover*

### **What Is Passover?**

The eight-day festival of Passover is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nisan. It commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. And, by following the rituals of Passover, we have the ability to relive and experience the true freedom that our ancestors gained.

### **The Story in a Nutshell**

After many decades of slavery to the Egyptian pharaohs, during which time the Israelites were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors, G-d saw the people's distress and sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message:

"Send forth My people, so that they may serve Me." But despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed G-d's command. G-d then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues, afflicting them and destroying everything from their livestock to their crops.

At the stroke of midnight of 15 Nisan in the year 2448 from Creation (1313 BCE), G-d visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, killing all their firstborns. While doing so, G-d spared the Children of Israel, "passing over" their homes—hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh's resistance was broken, and he virtually chased his former slaves out of the land. The Israelites left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have

time to rise. Six hundred thousand adult males, plus many more women and children, left Egypt on that night and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their birth as G-d's chosen people.

### **Passover Observances**

Passover is divided into two parts:

The first two days and last two days (the latter commemorating the Splitting of the Red Sea) are full-fledged holidays. Holiday candles are lit at night, and Kiddush and sumptuous holiday meals are enjoyed on both sets of nights and days. We don't go to work, drive, write, or switch on or off electric devices. We are permitted to cook and to carry outdoors (except on Shabbat).

# HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

## Passover

The middle four days are called *Chol Hamo'ed*, semi-festive "intermediate days," when most forms of work are permitted.

To commemorate the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when they left Egypt, we don't eat—or even retain in our possession—any *chametz* from midday of the day before Passover until the conclusion of the holiday. *Chametz* means leavened grain—any food or drink that contains even a trace of wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt, or their derivatives, and which wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation. This includes bread, cake, cookies, cereal, pasta, and most alcoholic beverages. Moreover, almost any processed

food or drink can be assumed to be *chametz* unless certified otherwise.

Ridding our homes of *chametz* is an intensive process. It involves a full-out spring-cleaning, search-and-destroy mission during the weeks before Passover, and it culminates with a ceremonial search for *chametz* on the night before Passover and then a *chametz*-burning ceremony on the morning before the holiday. *Chametz* that cannot be disposed of can be sold to a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday.

Instead of *chametz*, we eat matzah—flat unleavened bread. It is a *mitzvah* to partake of matzah on the two *seder* nights, and during

the rest of the holiday (except Shabbat) it is optional.

The highlight of Passover is the *seder*, observed on each of the first two nights of the holiday. The *seder* is a fifteen-step, family-oriented tradition, and a ritual-packed feast.

## QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Have you ever felt that your lack of background or depth in Jewish learning limits your ability to connect spiritually?





## ELIJAH'S CUP

What is the meaning  
behind this custom?

Why do we fill up the  
cup but not drink it?

## TEXT 1A

*Mishnah, Pesachim  
10:1*

וְאֶפִּילוֹ עָנִי שְׂבִי שְׂרָאֵל . . . לֹא יִפְתָּחוּ לוֹ  
מֵאַרְבַּע כּוֹסוֹת שֶׁל יַיִן, וְאֶפִּילוֹ מִן הַתְּמָחוּי.

Even the most destitute Jew . . . should not be provided with less than four cups of wine, even if they are being supplied by the public food bank.

Drinking four cups of wine is an integral part of the *seder* night.



# TEXT 1B

*Talmud, Pesachim*  
117b–118a

אַרְבַּע כָּסִי תִיקְנוּ רַבָּנָן דְּרַף  
חֵירוֹת, כָּל חַד וְחַד נֶעֱבִיד  
בֵּיהּ מִצָּנָה.

רַבִּיעִי גּוֹמֵר עָלָיו אֶת הַהִלֵּל  
וְאוֹמֵר עָלָיו בִּרְכַּת הַשִּׁיר.

מֵאִי "בִּרְכַּת הַשִּׁיר"? רַב  
יְהוּדָה אָמַר: "יְהִלְלוּךָ ה'  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ". וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר:  
"נִשְׁמַת כָּל חַיִּי".

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: חֲמִישִׁי גּוֹמֵר עָלָיו  
אֶת הַהִלֵּל, וְאוֹמֵר הִלֵּל  
הַגָּדוֹל, דְּבַרִּי רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן.

The sages instituted the drinking of four cups in the manner of freedom, and they attached a *mitzvah* to be performed with each one. . . .

Over the fourth cup the leader of the *seder* recites the complete Hallel and the blessing of the song at the end of Hallel.

What is the "blessing of the song"? Rabbi Yehudah said: It is the blessing that begins with the words, "They shall praise You, L-rd, our G-d." Rabbi Yochanan said that one also recites the Nishmat prayer, beginning with the words, "The breath of all living things."

The sages taught in a Baraita: Over the fifth cup one completes Hallel and recites the Great Hallel—this is the opinion of Rabbi Tarfon.

## THE FOUR CUPS

1. There are four cups, and we perform a mitzvah with each one.
2. The mitzvah associated with the fourth cup is reciting Hallel.
3. Rabbi Tarfon's opinion is that Hallel is recited over a *fifth* cup.

## TEXT 2

*Rabbi Yosef Caro,  
Shulchan Aruch,  
Orach Chayim 481:1*

אחר ארבע כוסות אינו רשאי  
לשתות יין אלא מים.

After the four cups, we are not allowed  
to drink any more wine, only water.

## THE TWO OPINIONS:

### FOUR CUPS

- We drink four cups of wine on the *seder* night.
- Hallel is recited over the fourth cup.

### FIVE CUPS

- We drink five cups of wine on the *seder* night.
- Hallel is recited over the fifth cup.

### THE PROBLEM

After the four cups, we are not allowed to drink any more wine, only water.

### THE SOLUTION

We pour a fifth cup but we do not drink it.



Elijah's Cup got its name from the Jewish tradition that Elijah the Prophet will resolve unanswered questions in Jewish law when he returns in the messianic era.

“תיקו”

*teiku*

The one-word conclusion  
that the Talmud gives to  
unanswerable questions.



## TEXT 3

Rabbi Yeshayahu  
Halevi Horowitz,  
Shenei Luchot Haberit,  
Torah Shebe'al Peh,  
Kelal Leshonot Sugyot

וַיֵּשׁ אֹמְרִים. “תִּיקוּ” רָאִשִׁי תְּבוֹת:  
“תִּשְׁבִּי יִתְרֵץ קִשְׁיוֹת וְאַבְּעִיּוֹת.”

Some say *teiku* (תִּיקוּ) is an acronym for the Hebrew phrase, “תִּשְׁבִּי יִתְרֵץ קִשְׁיוֹת וְאַבְּעִיּוֹת—Elijah will resolve questions and problems.”

## TEXT 4

Rabbi Eliyahu of  
Vilna, cited in Ta'amei  
Haminhagim, Inyanei  
Pesach 551 t

טעם למנהג שמוזגין כוס חמישי, וקוראין אותו כוס של אליהו הנביא,  
משום דאיכא פלוגתא בגמרא אם צריכין כוס חמישי, ולא אפסקא הלכתא.  
וכשיבוא אליהו יתברר הספק. ועל כן מוזגין הכוס מספק ואין שותין אותו,  
וקוראין אותו כוס של אליהו, כי בבואו יתבררו כל הספקות וגם ספק זה.

The following is why it is customary to pour a fifth cup, which we call Elijah's Cup. There is a Talmudic dispute as to whether we ought to drink a fifth cup at the *seder*. The final ruling was never issued, so Elijah will resolve this question when he arrives. Because there is a doubt about this matter, we pour the fifth cup but do not drink it. We call it Elijah's Cup to indicate that when he comes, this doubt, among all others, will be resolved.

## QUESTION

Why do we pour only one Elijah's Cup for the entire table? If it's like the other four cups, each participant should pour a fifth cup for themselves.

## ANSWER

Elijah's Cup is a relatively recent innovation, introduced into the *seder* in the spirit of this night's theme of Messianic anticipation. The point isn't to drink the cup, but to let Elijah come and do so.

## TEXT 5

*Malachi 3:23*

הִנֵּה אֶנְכִּי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם, אֶת אֵלִיָּה  
הַנָּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם ה'.

Behold, I am sending to you Elijah the  
Prophet before the day of G-d comes.



Elijah: The herald of  
the coming of Mashiach.

# TEXT 6

*Rashi, Leviticus 26:42*

”וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב” (ויקרא כו, מב):

בְּחֶמְשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת נִכְתָּב מְלֵא, וְאֵלֶיהוּ חָסַר בְּחֶמְשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת, יַעֲקֹב  
נָטַל אוֹת מִשְּׁמוֹ שֶׁל אֵלֶיהוּ עָרְבוֹן שְׂיָבוֹא וַיִּבְשֹׁר גְּאוּלַּת בָּנָיו.

“I will remember My covenant with Jacob” (Leviticus 26:42).

The name “Yaakov” is written in full [i.e., with a vav], in five places in Scripture, and the name Elijah is written defectively [without a vav], in five places in Scripture. Jacob took a letter [“vav”] from the name of Elijah as security, to guarantee that he would come and herald the Redemption of his [Jacob’s] children.

The night of Passover,  
the anniversary of our  
first redemption from  
Egypt, is an especially  
auspicious time for  
the final Redemption.



# TEXT 7

*Talmud, Rosh  
Hashanah 11b*

בְּנִיסָן נִגְאָלוּ, בְּנִיסָן עֲתִידִין לִיגָאֵל.

מִנָּלָן? אָמַר קָרָא (שְׁמוֹת יב, מב) “לֵיל שְׂמֵרִים” - לֵיל  
הַמְּשֹׁמֵר וְכָא מִשְׁנֶשֶׁת יָמֵי בְּרֵאשִׁית.

In the month of Nisan we were redeemed [from Egypt], and in Nisan we will be redeemed again.

How do we know this? For the verse states regarding Passover eve, “It is a night of anticipation for G-d” (Exodus 12:42). This means that it’s a night that has been anticipated since the Six Days of Creation as the date of the final Redemption.

## TEXT 8

*Rabbi Yaakov  
Reischer, Chok  
Yaakov 480*

מְנַהֵג בַּכָּמָה מְקוֹמוֹת, שָׂאִין  
נוֹעֲלִין הַחֲדָרִים שְׁיִשְׁנִים שָׁם  
בְּלֵיל פֶּסַח, כִּי “בְּנִיסָן נִגְאָלוּ  
וּבְנִיסָן עֲתִידִים לִיִּגְאֹל”. דְּכַתִּיב  
“לֵיל שְׁמֵרִים” – “לֵילָה  
הַמְּשׁוֹמֵר מִשְׁשֵׁת יָמֵי בְּרָאשִׁית”.  
וְאִם יָבוֹא אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִמָּצֵא פֶתַח  
פְּתוּחַ וְיִצָּא לִקְרָאתוֹ מְהֵרָה.  
וְאֵנוּ מְאַמְּיָנִים בְּזֶה . . .  
וְנוֹהֲגִין בָּאֵלוּ מְדִינוֹת לְמִזּוֹג כּוֹס  
אַחַד יוֹתֵר מִהַמְּסוּבִין וְקוֹרִין  
אוֹתוֹ כּוֹס שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא.

In numerous places, it is customary to leave the doors unlocked on Passover eve. For “in the month of Nisan we were redeemed [from Egypt], and in Nisan we will be redeemed again.” As it says, “It is a night of anticipation for G-d,” which means “a night that has been anticipated since the Six Days of Creation as the date of the final Redemption.” If Elijah indeed arrives, he will find an open door, and we will be able to go out to greet him quickly. Indeed, we believe that he will arrive. . . .

It is customary in our regions to pour one additional cup. We call it “Elijah’s Cup.”



The *seder* night is all about redemption. The customs we do reflect this theme:

1. We leave the door unlocked for Elijah.
2. We pour a cup of wine for Elijah.

## QUESTION

If there is a strong Talmud-based argument for a fifth cup at the *seder*, why was the custom of Elijah's Cup only introduced recently in Ashkenazi regions? Why didn't Jews adopt it earlier?

## TEXT 9A

*Talmud, Shabbat  
112b*

אם ראשונים בני מלאכים - אנהנו בני אנשים. ואם ראשונים  
בני אנשים - אנו כחמורים, ולא כחמורו של רבי חנינא בן  
דוסא ושל רבי פנחס בן יאיר, אלא כשאר חמורים.

If the early generations are characterized as sons of angels, we are the sons of men. And if the early generations are characterized as the sons of men, we are akin to donkeys. And this is not referring to the [extraordinarily intelligent] donkeys of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa or the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair; rather, we are akin to regular donkeys.

## TEXT 9B

*Talmud, Eruvin 53a*

אמר רבי יוחנן: ליבן של ראשונים כפתחו של אולם,  
ושל אחרונים כפתחו של היכל, ואנו כמלוא נקב  
מחט סידקית.

Rabbi Yochanan said: The hearts [i.e., the wisdom] of the early sages were as wide as the doorway to the Entrance Hall of the Temple [which was twenty by forty cubits], and the hearts of the later sages were like the doorway to the Sanctuary [which was ten by twenty cubits]. And we—our hearts are like the eye of a fine needle.

Our current generation is on a lower level than the previous generations.



# TEXT 10

*Rabbi Eliyahu of  
Vilna, Bi'ur Hagra to  
Sifre Detzni'uta, p. 35*

כי מעת שחרב הבית יצאה רוחנו עטרת ראשנו, ונשארנו רק אנחנו הוא גוף שלה בלא נפש. ויציאה לחוץ לארץ הוא הקבר, ורימה מסובבת עלינו, ואין בידינו להציל מן העובדי כוכבים האוכלים בשרינו.

ומכל מקום היו חבורות וישיבות גדולות, עד שנרקב הבשר והעצמות נפזרו פיזור אחר פיזור. ומכל מקום היו עדיין העצמות קיימות, שהתלמידי חכמים שבישראל מעמידי הגוף, עד שנרקבו העצמות ולא נשאר אלא תרווד רקב מאתנו, ונעשה עפר שחה לעפר נפשנו.

ואנחנו מקוין עתה לתחית המתים, "התנערי מעפר קומי כו'" (ישעיה נב, ב) ויערה רוח ממרום עלינו.

From the time the Temple was destroyed, our spirit departed us: our crowning glory was lost, leaving us as mere bodies without souls. Our exile to foreign lands was like a grave for us, as we were surrounded by worms and had no way to save ourselves from the idolaters who devoured our flesh.

Groups of scholars and great academies persisted for a time, until the flesh decayed, and the bones were scattered further and further. Even then, the bones remained, for the Torah scholars of Israel upheld the body. But eventually, the bones too, decayed, leaving behind only a spoonful of decomposed bone dust, "For our soul is cast down to the dust" (Psalms 44:26).

Now we await the Resurrection of the Dead, as the verse states, "Arise, shake yourselves off from the dust" (Isaiah 52:2), and "May a spirit from above be poured upon us" (Isaiah 32:15).

## ANSWER

Because we're on a lower level, we're the ones who innovated the fifth Cup of Elijah in anticipation of Mashiach. While our spiritual state is low, our lack of sophistication fosters a unique simplicity and sincerity that makes it easier to be truly genuine.

# TEXT 11

*Rabbi Tzadok  
Hakohen of Lublin,  
Peri Tzadik, Vayechi 1*

לא ימס לבבנו מאשר אנחנו  
בעקבתא דמשיחא, ובכל דור  
הנפשות מתקטנים ואיך נזכה  
להגאולה.

כי רואים אנחנו מה שקרה לאבותינו  
בגלותם, ודייקא בגלות הגיעו לכל  
הקדושות כי כן רצון ה' יתברך.

ושמעתי בשם הרב הקדוש  
מפרשיסחא זכר צדיק לברכה, שאף  
שהנפשות מתקטנים בכל דור, מכל  
מקום, הנקודה שבלב נטהר בכל  
דור ודור יותר.

Despite the fact that we are living in the final era before the Coming of the Messiah, and the souls diminish in every passing generation, our hearts should not falter.

Consider what happened to our ancestors during their exile—it was specifically during exile that they attained all the greatest levels of holiness, for such is the Divine Will.

I heard in the name of the holy rebbe, Reb Simchah Bunim of Peshischa, of blessed memory, that although the souls diminish in greatness with each passing generation, nevertheless, the inner core of the heart becomes progressively purer.



We are like a “dwarf on a giant’s shoulders,” building upon the work of our greater predecessors.

# TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Torat  
Menachem 5742:3,  
pp. 1290-1291*

כיצד אפשר לומר שדורנו זה שייך ביותר  
לגאולה העתידה - הרי ידוע מאמר  
רבותינו זכרונם לברכה "אם הראשונים  
כמלאכים וכו'", "אכשור דרא בתמיה"!?!

ונוסף לזה: כיצד אפשר לומר שפעולה  
אחת בלבד תביא את הגאולה העתידה -  
לכאורה, הכרעת כף המאזניים בחוט  
השערה בלבד, אינה שייכת עדיין למעמד  
ומצב דגאולה אמיתית ושלמה!?

והביאור בזה: ידוע המשל של גדולי  
ישראל המובא בספרי מוסר מננס העומד  
על גבי הענק, שלמרות היותו "ננס", הנה  
בעמדו על גבי הענק, הרי הוא מסוגל  
לראות למרחק רב יותר מאשר ה"ענק".

How can we say that our generation is so deeply related to the Redemption? Didn't our sages teach, "If the early generations are like angels, we are like humans?" Is our generation the most worthy?

Furthermore, how can one claim that a single action alone can trigger the future Redemption? Seemingly, tipping the scale by a miniscule difference shouldn't be able to effect such a change as the complete and true Redemption.

We can answer this question based on the parable given in Jewish ethical works, about a dwarf standing on a giant's shoulders. Although the dwarf is small, by standing on the giant's shoulders, they are able to see farther than the giant.

# TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Torat  
Menachem 5742:3,  
pp. 1290-1291*

ועל דרך זה בנמשל: הדורות הראשונים  
הם בדוגמת ה"ענק", "ראשונים  
כמלאכים", ואילו דורנו זה הוא בדוגמת  
ה"ננס" בלבד. אבל אף על פי כן, מאחר  
שכללות העבודה דדורנו ("ננס") באה  
לאחרי העבודה דדורות הראשונים ("על  
גבי הענק"), הרי דוקא על ידי העבודה  
דדורנו זה זוכים לגאולה העתידה, ועל  
זה אמרו חכמינו זכרונם לברכה "אין  
המלאכה נקראת אלא על שם גומרה".

This applies to our generation. The earlier generations are comparable to the "giant"—the "earlier ones are like angels." Our generation, on the other hand, is comparable to the "dwarf." Nevertheless, since all of our generation's work ("the dwarf") builds upon the labor of the earlier generations ("on the shoulders of the giant"), it is specifically the efforts of our generation that can bring about the future Redemption. As our sages have stated, "The task is attributed only to the one who completes it."

The custom of Elijah's Cup was only recently instituted because our generation is the one of redemption.



# TEXT 13

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot, vol. 27, pp.  
54-55*

וואס די אמונה איז דא בא יעדן אידן,  
וועלכע זיינען אלע מאמינים בני מאמינים.  
ניט קוקנדיק אין וועלכן אופן זיין עבודה איז  
בכחותיו הגלויים, איז ביי אים דא שטענדיק  
(בגלוי – ועל כל פנים בפנימיות נפשו) די  
אמונה בביאת המשיח (ניט נאר "מאמין בו",  
נאר מחכה לביאתו) וועלכע זיינען א ציווי ה'  
בתורה שבכתב ובתורה שבעל פה.

ואדרבה, וואס שפעטער מ'געפינט זיך אין  
עקבתא דמשיחא, נעענטער צו דער גאולה,  
אלץ מער און שטארקער איז דאס מאיר בא  
אידן. און דעריבער איז דוקא בדורות  
האחרונים נתגלה און נתפשט געווארן דער  
מנהג פון "למזוג כוס אחד יותר מהמסובין  
וקורין אותו כוס של אליהו הנביא".

The belief in Mashiach's coming is present in every Jew, as "all Jews are believers, the children of believers." Regardless of the level of Divine service we have attained with our conscious self, we constantly possess—openly, or at least in the inner depths of our soul—faith in the Coming of the Mashiach. And not only faith that he will eventually come, but also actual anticipation of his arrival. We all possess this faith because this is a Divine commandment stated in both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.

Moreover, the closer we find ourselves to the time of Mashiach, the stronger and brighter this faith grows among the Jewish people. This is why it is specifically in the later generations that the custom of pouring an additional cup called "the Cup of Elijah the Prophet" has been revealed and spread.



It's precisely because of  
our simplicity that we  
hold a unique power to  
pave the way for  
ultimate Redemption.

## KEY POINTS

1. There's a custom to pour a fifth cup at the *seder* and not to drink it, called "Elijah's Cup."
2. Some explain that this is to satisfy conflicting Talmudic opinions about a fifth cup, and it's named after Elijah who will one day resolve all disputes.
3. This explanation doesn't satisfy the reality that we pour only one cup for all *seder* attendees.
4. Elijah's primary role is herald of the Redemption.
5. Others explain that this cup is in anticipation of the Redemption, something with which the *seder* night is uniquely associated.
6. Despite our generation's simplicity, our sincere and unpretentious efforts have a unique power to pave the way for ultimate Redemption.

