

# Passover:

*for Sunset April 18 through Sunset April 26*

Passover is probably the best known and most widely celebrated of the Jewish holidays. The primary observances of Passover are related to the Exodus from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. Passover lasts for eight days. The first two and last two days of the holiday are days when Jews often attend synagogue services.

The name "Passover" refers to G-d "passing over" the houses of the Jews when G-d was slaying the firstborns of Egypt.

Probably the most significant observance related to Passover involves the removal of *chametz* (leavened foods) from our homes. This commemorates the story of the Jews leaving Egypt in a hurry, without time to let their bread rise. These Jews baked *matzah*, an unleavened bread, made simply from flour and water that's cooked very quickly. Eating *matzah* during Passover is a symbolic way of removing the "puffiness" (arrogance, pride) from our souls.

On the first two nights of Passover, we have a *Seder* (which means "order"), an orderly family meal filled with eating traditional foods and retelling the Passover story. The *Haggadah* ("the telling") is the book used by Jews to discuss this story at the *Seder*. Though the evening has a definite order, the *Haggadah* is not a rote recitation, but rather a dynamic exploration that involves relating our history to our current lives. The rabbis who formalized the *Seder* were acutely aware of the need to shape the telling to the individual concerns of participants.

Reflecting on the Passover story may remind us not only of a transcendent moment in Jewish history, but of transformative times in our own lives when we face illness or other life challenges. In the *Haggadah* it is written "in every generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Egypt." This sentence empowers those of us who struggle with illness to see this holiday as an opportunity to reach toward recovery and achieve healing.

May this year's Passover holiday bring you the freedom and healing you need.

This article was written for you by the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program, a program of Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis. Using the wisdom and traditions of Judaism, the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program offers comfort, hope and strength to individuals experiencing loss, life challenges, illness, dying and grief. The Healing Program provides trained volunteers to visit Jews who request a visit in hospitals, nursing homes and in hospice care. The Healing Program's Francine and Neil Feinberg Healing Resource Library located at Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis has articles, books, recordings, and videos available for loan. For information about the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program, its services, educational programs, and volunteer opportunities, call 952-542-4840.