

# Passover

Passover celebrates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt and is one of the most important Jewish holidays of the year. Different Jewish communities may have specific traditions related to the celebration of Passover; in addition, individuals may choose to celebrate Passover in a variety of different ways.

Passover (*Pesah* in Hebrew) is one of the three pilgrimage festivals during which, in biblical times, Jews would gather to Jerusalem, to the Temple. In Israel, and as described in the Bible, it is a seven-day holiday. The first and seventh days are observed as *hag*, special festival days on which one should not do any work. Outside of Israel, it lasts for eight days, and both the first two days and the last two days are traditionally observed as *hag*\*. Traditionally, Jews have a meal called a Seder (from the Hebrew word “order”) on the first two nights of Passover (and the first night in Israel), although some Jews will choose to have only one Seder on the first night. During the Seder, Jews tell the story of the exodus from Egypt using a text called the Haggadah. While Passover is always in the spring, the exact dates on the Gregorian (civic) calendar change from year to year; managers should therefore be alert and annually check the dates in advance.

In 2023, Passover begins at sundown of **April 5<sup>th</sup>** and ends at nightfall of **April 13<sup>th</sup>**. Also note that in Israel, the holiday of Passover is celebrated for seven days.

\*A note on pronunciation: The Hebrew letter *het* (ח) is a guttural sound. It is sometimes written which a “ch” instead of an “h”. In this fact sheet, we use an underlined *h* to signify the letter *het* when transliterating Hebrew words, including in the holiday greetings below.

## Diet

To commemorate the plight of the Jewish ancestors who left Egypt so quickly that they did not have time to let their baking bread rise, many Jews eat only unleavened bread, called matzah, and abstain from leavened foods for the duration of Passover. Also, many Jews observe the holiday by ridding their homes of all leavened foods (called *hametz* in Hebrew). It is important to note that some Jews who do not keep kosher (the word referring to Jewish food laws) throughout the year might still follow Passover’s dietary restrictions. When scheduling events where food is present during Passover, it is important to be aware that Jewish co-workers may be observing Passover traditions and have dietary restrictions during this time that they do not have at other times of the year.

## Scheduling

During Passover, Jewish employees may request time off work to attend a Seder, observe the holiday, or even to prepare for the holiday. Invite your employees to share how they personally observe Passover and what practices they have that should be respected during the eight days of Passover.



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## Greetings

It is appropriate to wish a coworker Happy Passover; you may also wish your coworker *Hag Sameach*, which means “happy holiday” in Hebrew.

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