

Fun Facts about Pesach:

- Pesach, celebrated on 15th of Nissan in the Hebrew calendar is considered the beginning of the New Year. (Rosh Hashana is too. RH is the Physical New Year (commemorating the creation of the world and Man-Kind. Pesach is the Spiritual New Year, celebrating our birth as a people.)
- Seder – meaning “order” comes from the same Hebrew word as Siddur. Haggadah means “The telling”
- Pesach is the oldest continuously celebrated Jewish festival.
- The story of Pesach is not only found in the Haggadah but also in the Torah – The book of Exodus, chapter 12. It is not read at Pesach time however!
- The largest Seder meal in the world takes place in Nepal. About 2000 people, most of them young Israeli Backpackers, come together for the meal.
- Jews from Iran and Afghanistan whack each other with spring onions. The custom takes place before the traditional song Dayenu. The origins of this custom may be related to mimicking the whips of the Egyptian slave drivers.
- Coca Cola is made kosher for Pesach by replacing the corn syrup with sugar as corn is Kitniyot and nor permitted to be eaten by Ashkenazim during Pesach.
- Some Ethiopian Jews break all their cooking dishes at Pesach and make a new set to symbolise a true break with the past.
- Charoset, made from dates or apples, appears on every Seder table to represent the mortar in the bricks used by the Jewish slaves. Jews in Gibraltar actually put ground up brick dust in their charoset!
- Hasidic Jews from the Polish town of Gora Kalwaria re-enact the crossing of the Red Sea by pouring water on their floor, lifting up their coats as if they were crossing water and naming the towns they’d pass on the way.
- Abraham Lincoln was assassinated during Passover. According to the American Jewish Historical Society, many Jews were in synagogue for the holiday when news of Lincoln’s assassination broke. Altars in temples “were quickly draped in black and, instead of Passover melodies, the congregations chanted Yom Kippur hymns. Rabbis set aside their sermons and wept openly at their pulpits, as did their congregants.”
- The four cups of wine symbolize the four stages of redemption. Others interpret the cups to be representative of the four matriarchs of Israel.

- Some Jews set out two extra cups. One for Elijah the prophet and one for Miriam, Moses's sister. This one is filled with water to symbolise Miriam's well that sustained the Israelites in the desert.
- The world's largest matzo ball was unveiled in 2010 at the Jewish Food Festival in Tucson, Ariz., weighing in at 488 pounds. Ingredients included more than 1,000 eggs, 25 pounds of chicken fat and 125 pounds of matzo meal.
- Pesach has three names: Pesach (referring to the Passover offering/sacrifice), Hag Hamatzot (the festival of Matzah) and Zeman Heirutenu (The time of our Freedom).
- Many centuries ago, the Jewish people who lived in the Sahara used to abandon their fortified villages on Passover and march into the desert, in memory of the first Passover.
- Moses is only mentioned once in the Haggadah.
- Many scholars believe that there is a resemblance between RAMESES II and the Pharaoh of Exodus. They say that RAMESES II, whose likeness is found in many of the great ruins and artefacts of ancient Egypt, was probably the Pharaoh of Exodus 12.
- A news report stunned the world several years ago about the discovery of possible ancient chariot wheels at the bottom of the Red Sea. In June 2003, Bible enthusiasts dove the waters of the Red Sea, alleging they found and photographed parts of chariots that may be the actual remains of the catastrophe brought upon the Egyptian army which pursued the Israelites, according to the Book of Exodus in the Bible. They produced a DVD called "The Red Sea Crossing" which documents the work of numerous researchers who have probed an underwater land bridge between Nuweiba, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. "What they found strewn across the bottom of the Red Sea has shaken the religious and scientific community," says Rood. "Cameras mounted on remote-controlled submarines revealed coral-encrusted chariot parts, horse and human remains strewn like battlefield wreckage on the bottom of the Red Sea."
- Pesach is a very feminist festival. Whilst Moses is the protagonist of the story. The whole thing would not have happened without 5 vital women – Yocheved (Moses's mother), Miriam (Moses's sister), Batya (Pharaoh's daughter) Shifra and Pruah (the midwives of the Jews in Egypt). Do you know what special roles these women played?
- The Jews "wandered in the desert for 40 years". In fact, they were stationary for about 38 of those 40 years.
- It is said that 2 – 2.5 million Jews left Egypt. This was but 1/5 of the Jewish population of Egypt. 4/5 remained in Egypt and died during the plagues.

- Moses is said to have a speech impediment which is why Aaron did a lot of the talking.
- There is a tool for making the rows and rows of tiny holes in the Matzah. It is called a dough docker. The holes are made to stop the matzah from rising during baking.
- Matzah is cooked for 18 minutes in a very hot oven. This is to ensure that it doesn't have time to rise and become chametz. Matzah that is watched from the time of reaping to ensure that nothing comes into contact with it that could cause it to rise is called "Shmura "(Watched or guarded) matzah.
- We eat Matzah because the Jews didn't have time to let their bread rise because they fled into the desert so quickly, right? Wrong! The Jews knew 2 weeks in advance that they were going to be leaving Egypt and that they would eat Matzah for 7 days. In fact, Matzah was the food that they had been eating the entire time they were enslaved, so it definitely wasn't something new to them that occurred when their bread didn't rise. So why Matzah? We eat Matzah because it is not bread. Bread symbolises being lofty and haughty. It symbolises "fluff", "nothingness", "being filled with hot air". It symbolises being absorbed by all those things that distract us in life. Pesach is the festival of our Freedom... and Matzah symbolises that freedom – both in remembrance of the actual freedom from slavery in Moshe's time and the freedom to be ourselves and to make choices in our time.
- We place our mezuzahs on our door posts, remembering the daubing of lamb's blood on the Jewish homes in Egypt so that the angel of death would "Passover"