

What Is Pesach Sheni (the Second Passover)?

What Does Pesach Sheni Mean?

Pesach Sheni means "Second Passover [Sacrifice]." It marks the day when someone who was unable to participate in the Passover offering in the proper time would observe the mitzvah exactly one month later.

It is customary to mark this day by eating matzah—shmurah matzah, if possible—and by omitting Tachanun from the prayer services.



Art by Sefira Lightstone

Read Matzah on Pesach Sheini: When and How?

How Pesach Sheni Came About

A year after the Exodus, G-d instructed the people of Israel to bring the Passover offering on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nissan, and to eat it that evening, roasted over the fire, together with matzah and bitter herbs, as they had done the previous year just before they left Egypt.

“There were, however, certain persons who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron . . . and they said: ‘. . . Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present G-d’s offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?’” (Numbers 9:6–7).

In response to their plea, G-d established the 14th of Iyar as a day for the “Second Passover” (Pesach Sheni) for anyone who was unable to bring the offering on its appointed time in the previous month.

Read the Original Narrative

What Pesach Sheni Means

The day represents the “second chance” achieved by teshuvah, the power of repentance and “return.” In the words of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, “The Second Passover means that it’s never a ‘lost case.’”

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