

Cultural News



The Story of Passover

Perhaps the best known of the Jewish holidays, the splendid festival known as Passover has a rich and fascinating history.

The origin of Passover relates back to over 3,000 years ago when the Pharaoh of Egypt enslaved Israelites about 3000 years ago. The Pharaoh was known as Ramses II and was very cruel and harsh to his slaves. Haggadah, the Book of Exodus, mentions that Moses who was a simple Jewish shepherd felt deeply for the downtrodden conditions of his brother. God instructed him to go to the Pharaoh and demand the freedom of his people. However, Pharaoh ignored his plea. Moses once again warned Pharaoh of the God's wrath but Pharaoh turned a deaf ear to him. God then unleashed a series of 10 terrible plagues on the people of Egypt, one by one and after each punishment, Moses again repeated his plea to the Pharaoh. These plagues were: the water of River Nile turned into blood, frogs, lice (vermin), wild beasts (flies), blight (cattle disease), boils, hail, locusts, darkness, slaying of the first born

The first nine plagues only served to daunt the Pharaoh's wild spirit but were unable to make him submit to the will of God. Finally, God ordered the Hebrew slaves to make a sacrifice of the lamb in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem and mark their doors with the blood of the lamb, as an indication to the God to 'pass over' their houses while slaying the first born males of the Egyptians. Hebrews followed the word of God and thus, their first born males were saved from the tenth plague. 'Pesach' means 'passing over' or 'protection' in Hebrew. This calamity was a final blow to the Pharaoh and he ordered Israelites to be set free immediately and allow their passage to freedom.

In their hurry to finally be able to live free lives, Israelites did not even wait to let their dough rise and bake bread, but took raw dough instead to bake in the hot desert sun

as hard crackers called Matzohs on their journey. Moses led them through the desert. The angry Pharaoh sent his army to chase these ex-slaves and kill them all. But with the grace of God, Jews managed to reach the Red Sea, where they were trapped by the vast expanse of water. Moses called upon the God for assistance and suddenly Red Sea parted to give way to the Israelites and thus, they safely passed over to the other side. They were protected forever as the waves closed over the shocked army of the Pharaoh and drowned the whole army at once.

The Jewish people still hold this day dear to their hearts and they still thank the Lord for saving their ancestors the way he did. In the days before Passover, the house is prepared. The house is searched for any trace of yeast products. All products made from yeast are eaten or removed from the house, or given away. All the dishes, silverware, pots and pans are changed for a set that is used only for Passover.

In remembrance of the hardships their ancestors faced in slavery, the Jewish people hold a feast called the 'Seder' on the first night of Passover, a custom that has been practiced ever since the Hebrews were free from the slavery. The word 'Seder' stands for 'order' and signifies the order of historical events recalled in the Passover meal as well as the meal itself. The Seder is of a religious nature with a carefully prescribed ritual that makes the dinner quite unlike family dinners held on civil holidays. The ritual is laid out along with the main story of Passover being retold from the 'Haggadah', a special book that is followed during the Seder. The table is set with the finest china and silverware to reflect the importance of this meal.



APRIL 2014 CALENDAR

NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH
ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH
DEFEAT DIABETES MONTH
CELEBRATE DIVERSITY MONTH

- 1 - April Fool's Day (International)
- 7 - World Health Organization Day
- 8-12 - American Indian Awareness Week (US)
- 13 - Thomas Jefferson Day (US)
- 13-15 - Songkran - New Year (Lao/Thai)
- 13 - Palm Sunday (Christian)
- 13 - Vaisaki (Sikh)
- 15 - Therevadin New Year (Buddhist)
- 15-23 - Passover (Jewish)
- 20-26 - Animal Cruelty/Human Violence Awareness Week (US)
- 20 - Ramanavani (Hindu)
- 21 - First Day of Ridvan (Baha'i)
- 20 - Easter Sunday (Christian)
- 24 - World Meningitis Day
- 25 - Mahavir Jayanti (Jain)
- 27 - Holocaust Remembrance Day (US)

Sources: <http://www.theholidayspot.com>,
<http://www.happypassover.net>

New Interpreter Profile: Wanda Appel-Molina

Wanda Appel-Molina is the newest addition to the Spanish-language team at Medical Interpreting Services. She brings with her years of interpreting experience and in addition to speaking Spanish, Wanda also speaks Portuguese fluently, which is a great bonus to our department.

Wanda's journey started at the age of twenty five, when she visited the United States from Bolivia. Besides seeing family, she wanted to learn English and decided to stay in the U.S. In 2009 Wanda started to fulfill her longtime desired to become an interpreter. She attended San Francisco State University and obtained a certificate in Legal/Court Interpreting. She also took additional courses at the American River College and earned a certificate in Health Care Interpreting.

While living in Brazil, Wanda received a Bachelor (BA) Degree in Economics. She considers her greatest accomplishments to be a mom and raise her two sons, who have become terrific young men.

We asked Wanda, how does she feel about joining the Medical Interpreting Department at UCD MC? In her own words, "It was very exciting that I could become a part of the MIS team. I realized that the Latino community has a great need in bridging communication with health care providers, and I feel very fortunate to be able to assist with meeting that need."

Welcome on-board, Wanda! Seja bem-vindo!



Celebrating Arab American Heritage Month

Arab Americans and Americans of Middle Eastern heritage have a long history in the United States. They are U.S. military heroes, entertainers, politicians, and scientists. They are Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi and more. Yet the representation of Arab Americans in the mainstream media tends to be quite limited. Arabs are typically featured on the news when Islam, hate crimes or terrorism are the topics at hand. Arab American Heritage Month, observed in April, marks a time to reflect on the contributions Arab Americans have made to the U.S. and the diverse group of people who make up the nation's Middle Eastern population

Arab Immigration to the U.S.

While Arab Americans are often stereotyped as perpetual foreigners in the United States, people of Middle Eastern descent first began to enter the country in significant numbers in the 1800s, a fact that's often revisited during Arab American Heritage Month. The first wave of Middle Eastern immigrants arrived in the U.S. circa 1875, according to America.gov. A second wave arrived after 1940. The Arab American Institute reports that by the 1960s, about 15,000 Middle Eastern immigrants from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq were settling in the U.S. on average each year. By the following decade, the annual number of Arab immigrants increased by several thousands due to the Lebanese civil war.

Arab Americans in the 21st Century

Today an estimated 4 million Arab Americans live in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated in 2000 that Lebanese Americans constitute the largest group of Arabs in the U.S. About one in four of all Arab Americans is Lebanese. The Lebanese are followed by Egyptians, Syrians, Palestinians, Jordanians, Moroccans and Iraqis in numbers. Nearly half of the Arab Americans profiled by the Census Bureau in 2000 were born in the U.S. The Census Bureau also found that more men make up the Arab population in the U.S. than women, and that most Arab Americans

lived in households occupied by married couples.

While the first Arab-American immigrants arrived in the 1800s, the Census Bureau found that nearly half of Arab Americans arrived to the U.S. in the 1990s. Regardless of these new arrivals, 75 percent of Arab Americans said that they spoke English very well or exclusively while at home. Arab Americans also tend to be more educated than the general population, with 41 percent having graduated from college compared to 24 percent of the general U.S. population in 2000. The higher levels of education obtained by Arab Americans explain why members of this population were more likely to work in professional jobs and earn more money than Americans generally. On the other hand, more Arab-American men than women were involved in the labor force and a higher number of Arab Americans (17 percent) than Americans generally (12 percent) were likely to live in poverty.

It's difficult to get a complete picture of the Arab-American population for Arab American Heritage Month because the U.S. government has classified people of Middle Eastern descent as "white" since 1970. This has made it challenging to get an accurate count of Arab Americans in the U.S. and to determine how members of this population are faring economically, academically and so forth. The Arab American Institute has reportedly told its members to identify as "some other race" and then fill in their ethnicity. There's also a movement to have the Census Bureau give the Middle Eastern population a unique category by the 2020 census.

Aref Assaf supported this move in a column for the New Jersey Star Ledger. "As Arab-Americans, we have long argued for the need to implement these changes," he said. "We have long argued that current racial options available on the Census form produces a severe undercount of Arab Americans. The current Census form is only a ten question form, but the implications for our community are far reaching."

<http://racerelements.about.com/od/DataAboutRacialMinorities/a/Celebrating-Arab-American-Heritage-Month.htm>