

Passover, Egg on Seder Plate

Why do Jews have an egg on their *seder* plates? Does this not come from Easter?

The egg on the *seder* plate at Passover is a post-Second Temple Rabbinical addition. The roasted egg or *beitzah* in most Jewish traditions symbolizes the hardness of Pharaoh's heart. We would speculate that after the destruction of the Temple and the Dispersion of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel, new traditions were added to Passover to compensate for the loss of no longer observing it in the appointed place. New debates likely arose as Jews were spread abroad into many places where they had never lived before. As additions to the *seder* arose, eggs were probably an item that all Jewish communities could agree were "kosher for Passover," and the custom of having a roasted egg on the *seder* plate was instituted.

The inclusion of eggs at Easter time is a debated practice in Christianity. No one is entirely certain how they came about, but it is likely that they stem from some kind of Babylonian fertility rite. However, we do not stop eating eggs simply because pagans used them in their worship. Similarly, because the Jewish community employs an egg on the *seder* plate during Passover, we cannot all of a sudden make the judgment that they borrowed it "from Easter." There is always an alternative view that frequently eludes those who are out on an "egg witch hunt."