

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Mimouna and Seharane

Two joyful celebrations of spring, open doors, and togetherness, carried from North Africa and Kurdistan to Israel and around the world.

WHEN

Both began right after Passover, in spring. Mimouna starts at nightfall as Passover ends; in Israel, Seharane now takes place around Sukkot, in the fall.

MIMOUNA

A North African Jewish celebration, best known among Moroccan Jews, with open homes, sweets, and the thin pancake called *mufleta*.

SEHARANE

A festival of Kurdish Jews that lasted from one day to a week, spent outdoors with picnics, music, dancing, and stories.

TODAY

Mimouna is a nationwide celebration in Israel, and Seharane draws Kurdish Jewish families and guests to large public gatherings.

During the seven or eight days of Passover, Jewish families eat no bread or other leavened foods, called *hametz*. When the holiday ends, many communities celebrate the return of bread and the arrival of spring. Two of the liveliest of these celebrations come from the Middle East and North Africa. Moroccan and other North African Jews open their homes for Mimouna, a night of sweets, music, and visits from friends and neighbors. Kurdish Jews once headed into the hills for Seharane, a festival of camping, feasting, and dancing in nature. Both traditions traveled with families to Israel, where Mimouna grew into a nationwide celebration and Seharane was revived as a public festival.

Mimouna: an open house as Passover ends

- **Open doors.** As soon as Passover ends at nightfall, families set out a lavish table of cakes, pastries, and sweets and welcome friends, neighbors, and visitors. The celebration continues through the next day.
- **Mufleta.** The star of the table is the *mufleta*, a very thin pancake made from flour, water, and oil, cooked in a pan and eaten warm with butter and honey.
- **Help from neighbors.** Since Jewish homes held no flour during Passover, families in North Africa relied on their Muslim neighbors for flour and other ingredients. In Libya, Berber and Arab neighbors brought milk, butter, honey, and fresh produce.
- **Blessings for the year ahead.** Mimouna is a time of wishes for good luck, prosperity, and happy marriages. In some families, guests are sprinkled with mint or other greens dipped in milk.
- **The next day.** Families went on outings to the seashore, fields, and orchards. Some splashed sea water on their faces to recall the crossing of the Red Sea.

Where does the name come from?

No one knows for sure, and the debate is part of the fun. Ideas include:

- Maimon ben Joseph, the father of Maimonides, who lived in Fez, Morocco, and died around 1170.
- The Hebrew *emunah*, "faith," or *ani ma'amin*, "I believe."
- An Arabic word for wealth or good fortune.
- Manna, the food that sustained the Israelites in the desert.

Symbols on the Mimouna table

Every family's table looked a little different, but many items carried wishes for a fruitful year. In Morocco, families prepared flour, honey, milk, and butter for the first meals after Passover. In Libya, tables were decorated with flowers, wheat stalks, and sometimes live fish swimming in bowls, and golden rings were hidden in a bowl of flour. Some families arranged lucky symbols in fives, such as five pieces of gold jewelry or five beans on a pastry leaf, echoing the *hamsa*, the five fingered hand shared by people of many faiths across the region. Eggs, fruits, jams, cakes, milk, and wine often rounded out the spread.

Seharane: a Kurdish Jewish festival in nature

The Jews of Kurdistan, a mountainous region that today spans parts of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, trace their history back to ancient times. Their name for their spring festival is probably related to the Kurdish word *sayran*, a picnic or outing in nature.

- **Into the countryside.** Preparations began the night Passover ended. Families traveled out of town and set up camps with tents and bonfires, as almond trees bloomed around them.
- **Music and dance.** People wore their brightest clothes and best jewelry, danced in circles, and played the *zurna* (a reed pipe) and *dahola* (a large drum).
- **Food and stories.** Families cooked over campfires and shared dishes such as stuffed vegetables and *kubbeh selek*, a beet soup with meat dumplings. Evenings were for storytelling.
- **Good neighbors.** Local Muslims sometimes joined in as guests, or came to sell goods.

From spring to fall

After Kurdish Jews from Iraq moved to Israel in the early 1950s, Seharane was rarely celebrated for about twenty years. In the 1970s, community leaders revived it as a public festival and moved it to the Sukkot holiday period in the fall, partly so it would not compete with Mimouna. Sources differ on exactly when the move began.

Today, Seharane gatherings fill parks with picnics, music, and dancing, and non Jewish Kurds have been invited as guests.

Community by community

Morocco

The best known home of Mimouna. Families open their doors to a table of sweets and mufleta, served with honey and, often, mint tea. Records of the celebration go back at least to the eighteenth century.

Sources: My Jewish Learning; Wikipedia, "Mimouna"

Libya

Libyan Jews baked a round loaf with a hard boiled egg held in place by strips of dough, and enjoyed a dairy meal of buttermilk, sweets, and *muflita* with honey. Single men and women were blessed that they would marry in the coming year, and girls wore white.

Source: My Jewish Learning (Lesli Koppelman Ross)

Algeria

Algerian Jews, like Moroccan Jews, opened their homes to visitors for Mimouna.

Source: Wikipedia, "Mimouna"

Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan

Seharane could last anywhere from one day, as in Iranian Kurdistan, to a week. Some communities held it during the middle days of Passover instead. Visiting the graves of revered sages was part of the holiday for some.

Sources: My Jewish Learning (Mira Zylali); Wikipedia, "Seharane"

Israel: Mimouna

Mimouna became a mass public celebration in Israel from the late 1960s. Since the early 1970s, a central gathering has been held in Jerusalem's Sacher Park, attended by crowds and national leaders, while families across the country host open houses and picnics.

Source: Wikipedia, "Mimouna" and "Sacher Park"

Israel: Seharane

Kurdish Jewish families gather for Seharane each year around Sukkot with dancing, Kurdish dishes, and memories of the old homeland.

Sources: University of Washington; My Jewish Learning

North America and beyond

North African Jewish families brought Mimouna to France, Canada, South America, and the United States, where the evening marks the close of Passover. Some Jews of other backgrounds now join in too.

Sources: My Jewish Learning; Be'chol Lashon

Morocco today

A Moroccan group of Muslim students and young professionals chose the name Mimouna for their association, which works to preserve Jewish history in Morocco.

Source: Distinctions (Rachel Benaim-Abudarham)

Common misconceptions

- **"Mimouna is a holiday from the Torah."** It is a folk and community celebration, not a biblical holiday. Written records of it go back to the mid 1700s.
- **"Mimouna is only Moroccan."** Moroccan Jews made it famous, but Jews in Algeria and Libya celebrated it too.
- **"Seharane is a Sukkot holiday."** It began as a spring festival after Passover. It moved to the fall only in Israel.
- **"Jews and Muslims lived completely separate lives."** Muslim neighbors supplied flour and gifts for Mimouna and sometimes joined Seharane.

Words to know

Mimouna *Judeo Arabic*

The North African Jewish celebration held as Passover ends.

Mufleta (mofletta) *Maghrebi Arabic*

A thin pancake eaten warm with butter and honey.

Hametz *Hebrew*

Leavened foods, such as bread, avoided during Passover.

Emunah *Hebrew*

"Faith," one possible source of the name Mimouna.

Hamsa *Arabic*

A five fingered hand symbol of good fortune.

Seharane (Saharane) *Kurdish*

The Kurdish Jewish festival of spring and nature.

Sayran *Kurdish*

A picnic or outing in nature.

Hol hamoed *Hebrew*

The intermediate days of Passover or Sukkot.

Zurna and dahola *Kurdish*

A reed pipe and a large drum, played at Seharane.

Kubbeh selek *Kurdish Jewish cooking*

Beet soup with meat filled dumplings.

Bringing Mimouna and Seharane to life

In the public school classroom

- Compare spring festivals across cultures, such as Newroz, which Kurds of many faiths celebrate, and discuss why so many peoples mark spring outdoors.
- Map the journeys: trace families from Morocco, Libya, and Kurdistan to Israel, France, and the Americas.
- Explore hospitality and neighborliness: how did Jewish and Muslim neighbors help each other at Mimouna?
- Teach about the customs as culture. Do not have students perform blessings or rituals, and follow allergy rules if sharing food.

In Jewish schools and communities

- Host a Mimouna open house after Passover, with mufleta, mint tea, and a table of spring symbols.
- Invite Moroccan, Libyan, and Kurdish families to share memories, songs, and recipes.
- Read Kurdish Jewish folktales aloud, as Seharane evenings once ended with stories.
- Explore the Sephardi & Mizrahi Education Toolkit and JIMENA's Mimouna and Passover guide.

At home and with family

- Make mufleta together and serve it with butter and honey.
- Ask relatives: How did our family end Passover? Who came to visit?
- Take a family walk or picnic in nature, in the spirit of Seharane.
- Record an elder's memories for JIMENA's oral history project.

Questions for discussion

- Why do you think opening your home to guests became the heart of Mimouna?
- Seharane moved from spring to fall in Israel. What changes when a tradition moves to a new place or season, and what stays the same?
- What do these celebrations show about relations between Jews and their Muslim neighbors?

Side by side

	MIMOUNA	SEHARANE
Who	Jews of Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, and their descendants worldwide	Jews of Kurdistan, in today's Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria
Traditional timing	The night and day after Passover ends	Right after Passover, lasting one day to a week
Timing in Israel	Still right after Passover	Around Sukkot, in the fall
Setting	Open homes, then outings to the sea, fields, and orchards	Camps in the countryside, today public parks
Signature foods	Mufleta with butter and honey, sweets, milk	Stuffed vegetables, kubbeh selek, food cooked over the fire
Shared themes	Spring and renewal, hospitality, music and dance, and ties with Muslim neighbors	

Learn more

Watch and listen

[JIMENA Mimouna Festival 2021](#) (JIMENA)

vimeo.com/539370467

[Multilingual Passover with Dr. Sarah Bunin Benor](#) (JIMENA)

youtube.com/watch?v=lb4MWCz6a0

[Culture and Holidays video collection](#) (JIMENA)

jimena.org/videos/culture-and-holidays

Read

[The Folk Literature of the Kurdistan Jews: An Anthology, by Yona Sabar](#) (Yale University Press, 1982). Folktales for teachers and older readers.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yona_Sabar

[The Book of Jewish Food, by Claudia Roden](#) (Knopf, 1996). A classic history of Jewish cooking across communities.

penguinrandomhouse.com/books/156485/the-book-of-jewish-food-by-claudia-roden

From Distinctions, JIMENA's journal

["Morocco: A Modern Day Model for Convivencia," by Rachel Benaim-Abudarham](#) Jewish and Muslim life in Morocco, including the Muslim led Mimouna Association.

distinctionsjournal.org/morocco-a-modern-day-model-for-convivencia-in-the-arab-world

Explore online

[Mimouna: A Post Passover Celebration](#) (My Jewish Learning)

myjewishlearning.com/article/maimouna-a-post-passover-celebration

[Mimouna: Taking the End of Passover to a Whole New Level](#)

(Be'chol Lashon, on My Jewish Learning)

myjewishlearning.com/2016/04/25/mimouna-taking-the-end-of-passover-to-whole-new-level

[Seharaneh: A Post Passover Kurdish Jewish Celebration](#) (My Jewish Learning)

myjewishlearning.com/article/seharaneh-a-post-passover-kurdish-jewish-celebration

[The Jews of Kurdistan: How Kurdish Jews Became Israeli](#)

(University of Washington)

jewishstudies.washington.edu/global-judaism/kurdish-israeli-jews-kurdistan-saharane

From JIMENA

[Mimouna and Passover guide \(PDF\)](#)

s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/tf-jimena-prd/pdfs/Mimouna-compactado.pdf

[Sephardi & Mizrahi Education Toolkit](#) (designed mainly for Jewish day schools)

sepharditoolkit.org

[Oral history collection](#)

jimena.org/oral-history

[Share your family's story](#)

jimena.org/share-your-story



About JIMENA

JIMENA, Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, preserves and shares the history, heritage, and living culture of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews. Explore more explainers, oral histories, videos, and teaching resources at jimena.org/cultural-heritage.

A note for educators

This explainer is written to support teaching *about* religion and culture. In public schools, present customs, texts, and prayers as subjects of study, and do not ask students to perform rituals, recite blessings, or take part in religious practice. Share your family's story with JIMENA at jimena.org/share-your-story.

Sources consulted include My Jewish Learning (Lesli Koppelman Ross; Mira Zylali); Be'chol Lashon; the University of Washington Stroum Center for Jewish Studies; Distinctions; Claudia Roden; and Wikipedia's articles on Mimouna, Seharane, mofletta, and Sacher Park, which summarize research by Rachel Sharaby and reporting in Haaretz and the Times of Israel. Links checked October 2026; jimena.org links point to JIMENA's new website. © 2026 JIMENA. May be freely shared and printed for educational use.