

Messianic Passover Seder Service

Good Friday, April 10, 2020

Historical background

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..." (Gen 1:1)

From Adam and Eve came successive generations of people who spread out over the face of the earth. From all people God chose a man, Abram, to make a nation - unlike all other nations. God chose to bless and multiply that nation, from which He would bring a Redeemer who would die for the sins of the world.

From Abram came Isaac, from Isaac came Jacob, and from Jacob came the 12 sons, the 12 tribes of Israel. To preserve this fledgling nation from the surrounding nations that pressured them to conform to their idolatrous ways and intermarry, God used the famine in the Promised Land to lead Jacob and his family, 70 in all, down to Egypt, having prepared the way through the miraculous placement of Joseph in power in Egypt. They stayed 430 years and greatly multiplied in number. Following the death of Joseph, a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph and no longer favored the Jews, instead forcing them into slavery and cruel bondage. They cried out to God and He sent a savior, Moses. Through miraculous demonstrations of God's power over the Egyptian gods, Pharaoh finally released the Jews to go and worship their God in the desert. It was the final miracle of God's judgments that drove Pharaoh to expel the Israelites - the Passover of God's death angel. God commemorated that day by requiring the nation of Israel to celebrate Passover each year - to remember the Lord's gracious compassion and mighty power, His redemption through a lamb's blood, and His promise to restore the nation in the Promised Land.

As Christians we are told to remember our salvation, how God rescued and redeemed us by His mighty hand when we were hopelessly held in bondage to sin. So, we too celebrate God's miracle of redemption, remembering the Passover Lamb Who was Jesus.

Last Week of Jesus' Life and Ministry

Jesus' life was a brief 33 years. Though Jesus was not formally trained as a Rabbi, He left His trade as a carpenter to become a Rabbi at the age of 30. He began His public ministry by reading a portion of Isaiah 61, as recorded in Luke 4: 17-21 *"The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"*

After three years of preaching the Good News, healing the sick and casting out demons, Jesus knew His time had come. So, He journeyed toward Jerusalem, preparing His disciples along the way for His death and resurrection. It was His final week.

John 12:1-3

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

Sunday, the Triumphal entry Mark 11:1-2, 7-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here." When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

(Mon-Wednesday)

Jesus continued to dialogue with the religious leaders through the week; He taught Kingdom truths through parables and pronounced judgment and woes upon the Pharisees. He was there to observe the normal temple activities, including the offering of the poor widow's mite. He warned of Jerusalem's destruction, which happened in AD 70, and He spoke of the final events that would usher in His second coming.

On **Thursday** Jesus made preparations to celebrate Passover with His disciples.

Mark 14:12-17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" So, he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So, they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve.

The following is a compilation and re-arrangement of the Jewish Haggadah or booklet, which commemorates the Passover celebration.

On the Seder plate are several items.

The “**Betzah** “ or hard-boiled egg is a substitute for the sacrifice that was offered in the temple in Jerusalem. The sacrifices were actually meat offerings, so the egg is a visual reminder of the destruction of the temple; hence the egg represents mourning. The Jews also observe the roundness of the egg that suggests the cycle of life — even in the most painful of times, there is always hope for a new beginning.

The egg is later dipped in saltwater and eaten at the start of the meal.

The “**Pesach**” is the shank bone of the lamb. The Jews remembered on that fateful night that the lamb’s blood was applied over the door, causing the Death Angel to pass over. From that time the Jewish nation continued to sacrifice lambs for the atonement for sin.

The Torah required selected lambs to be put on public display for four days (Ex 12:3-6) to verify that they were without blemish. Jesus, following the triumphant entry, presented Himself in the temple for that exact time, and for that very purpose. He submitted to testing by the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and scribes (Mark 12:13), and when tried before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, He was found spotless.

Moreover, the lamb chosen for the Passover was staked out in the temple courtyard at 9am and was slaughtered publicly at 3PM. Even so, Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9am and He “breathed His last” at 3pm, just as the four-footed beast died in a liturgy that concluded with, “**It is finished!**”

Isaiah eloquently and clearly foretold of Jesus’ life and death, which would one day make the sacrifice of lambs obsolete; “*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.*” (Isaiah 53:7)

John the Baptist prophesied of Jesus, “*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*” (John 1:29)

As believers in the Messiah, we recognize that sacrifice is no longer necessary, because the death of our Messiah satisfied the need for sacrifice.

The “**Matzah**” is the unleavened bread the Jews took with them out of Egypt; they did not have time to leaven and raise the bread because of their swift departure from Egypt. The matzah is unleavened because it is to be without contamination, leaven being a symbol of sin. Modern day matzah is pierced and striped, hauntingly illustrating that our Messiah, who being without sin, was pierced according to the scripture. “*They have pierced my hands and my feet.*”

I can count all my bones.” (Psalm 22:16)

“But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53: 5)

The **Charoset** is a mixture of apples, walnuts and spices, reminiscent of mortar or the harsh labor the Israelites performed in Egypt, making bricks with mortar. This is eaten with the matzah.

The **horseradish** is the bitter herb, also reminiscent of their harsh labor, bringing tears to the eyes. This is also eaten with matzah and with the charoset.

The **parsley** represents the hyssop, the greens with which the Jews spread the lamb’s blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses on the night the Passover Angel brought judgment on the Egyptians.

The parsley is dipped in the **saltwater**, representing the tears of the Jews in their bondage, and also the saltwater of the Red Sea, God’s final judgment on the Egyptians.

There are **four cups of wine**, which are drunk during the Seder. These stand for the four “I wills” that God would do for His people, recorded in Exodus 6:6,7

The cup of Sanctification; “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”

The cup of Judgment; “I will rid you out of their bondage.”

The cup of Redemption; “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.”

The cup of Praise; “I will take you to Me for a people.”

When we drink from each cup, we recline to the left. This is explained in the Haggadah;

“Because reclining was a sign of a free man long ago, and since our forefathers were freed on this night, we recline at the table.”

Bedikat HaMetz – The search for leaven

Traditionally at Passover the woman does a thorough house cleaning, removing all leaven and products containing leaven such as bread, cereal, crackers, baking soda and baking powder, but purposefully leaving 10 small pieces of leaven (bread) hidden in the house. The father searches for the 10 pieces of leaven using only a light of a candle, and once leaven is found he uses a feather to scoop it onto a wooden spoon. Then taking the feather, spoon and all leaven in a white linen cloth the father takes it all to the synagogue where it is burned outside. This ceremony was commanded by God in Exodus 12, and for us is symbolic of purging out the sin in our lives.

In the Bible leaven is a symbol for sin. Let us search out the leaven of sin in our lives and so let us keep the feast of unleavened bread, the Passover, as it is written, *“Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.”* (1 Cor 11:28-30)

The Seder service begins with the **“Birkat Ha Ner”** or Blessing of the Festival Candles. The woman of the house lights the candles. As the woman begins the Seder and gives light to the Passover table, so it was from the seed of a woman the Messiah came to perform His redemptive ministry and bring light to the world. Jesus spoke of Himself, *“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12)

The **“Kiddush”** is the first cup of blessing, which is the cup of sanctification; *“I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians”*.

The word sanctification means to be set apart for God. Jewish families remember that God performed miraculous deeds to free, or to set apart Israel from Egypt.

We remember that Christ set us apart from the world as a holy nation to himself; 1 Peter 2:9; *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.”*

“Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.”

“When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:14-16)

Everyone drink the first cup while reclining to the left.

The **“Urkhatz”** or washing of the hands. Jewish families remember how the priest washed in the basin before he could come before God on behalf of Israel (Exodus 30:17-21). It was an ancient custom in the Middle East to wash one’s hands before eating. It was customary for a servant to perform this task. We read from John 13:1-11;

“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already

prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "You shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For He knew who was going to betray Him, and that was why He said not every one was clean."

The "**Karpas**" is the dipping of the parsley in **saltwater**.

As the wine is red in color and represents the blood of the Passover lamb, so also do the greens represent the hyssop, which was used to place the blood of the Passover lamb upon the doorposts and the lintel. The first dip in the saltwater refers to the tears shed by the Israelites while they were enslaved; the second dip refers to the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea and the miraculous deliverance that came for the nation of Israel (Exodus 14:13-31).

All dip and eat of the Karpas.

The "**Yachatz**" is the breaking of the middle matzah.

The unleavened matzah is found in its special covering, termed a **Unity**, even though it has three sections. Bypassing the first section and the third section, the middle piece of matzah is removed; it is broken in half and one half is hidden in a small napkin, which is called the **Afikomen**. This recalls how God split the Sea to allow the children of Israel to cross on dry ground. The broken middle matzah symbolizes *humility* and will be eaten later as the "bread of poverty".

As believers in the Messiah, we realize that the unity is representational of God - a unique Trinity manifested in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It reminds us that Jesus was broken for us, a visual reminder of His death on the cross for our sins.

The "**Maggid**" is the retelling of the story of the Exodus, found in Exodus 12: 1-14. It is the story of death, of life and of resurrection. The youngest child, who is now bursting with curiosity, asks the four time-honored questions:

1. On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night do we eat only matzah which is unleavened bread?"
2. On all other nights we eat vegetables and herbs of all kinds; why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs?"
3. On all other nights we never think of dipping herbs in water or in anything else; why on this night do we dip the parsley in saltwater and the bitter herbs in charoseth?"
4. On all other nights we eat either sitting upright or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?"

The leader of the Seder takes the time to fully explain, from these questions, the events of the Passover and exodus from Egypt.

The **second cup** is the cup of judgment or plagues, God pronouncing "I will rid you out of their bondage."

The Ten Plagues are rehearsed by taking a drop of wine from the cup as each plague is mentioned, as recorded in scripture; **blood, frogs, vermin, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, locust, darkness, slaying the first-born.**

"Truly, we can say Hallelujah, for the great redemption that God has wrought on our behalf - redemption at a terrific price. In Egypt, Israel's redemption required the death of the firstborn. For us, redemption from sin required the death of God's Son. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* (John 3:16)

All drink together of the second cup while reclining to the left.

Sing **Dayenu**; signifying "it would have sufficed us; it would have *been enough*"; a song of gratitude sung toward the end of Maggid, when the story of the Exodus is recounted during the Passover Seder. In each stanza, we recall another kindness that God performed for our ancestors and proclaim that *it alone would have been reason for celebration.*

The "**Rachtzah**" is the washing of hands before the meal with the customary blessings; "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who made us holy by His commandments."

Motzi, Motzot. The three matzahs, "unity" is held up, and the following blessing recited; "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."

The "**Maror**," the bitter herbs or horseradish that we eat, what is the reason for it? It is because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our forefathers in Egypt, as the Holy Scriptures

say, "They made their life bitter with hard labor, with bricks and mortar, with all kinds of work in the fields, all of this forced labor being rigorous."

The bitter herb speaks of the sorrow, the persecution and the suffering of our people under the hand of Pharaoh; and as horseradish brings tears to the eyes, so also did the great affliction of our people bring tears to their eyes.

The bottom matzah is broken into olive size pieces and dipped into bitter herbs.

This might have been the time when Jesus, anticipating His sorrow, looked at His disciples and sadly told them what was to come concerning one who would betray Him, and one who would deny Him.

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. (John 13: 21-30)

The "**Korech**" is the eating of bitter herbs and charoset, all between pieces of matzah. (Instruct all to take two pieces from the bottom matzah and put between them the bitter herbs and charoset, in a sandwich -like fashion)

"As the bitter herb is a symbol of suffering, the saltwater a symbol of tears, the greens a symbol of hyssop, the wine a symbol of blood, so the charoset is a symbol of mortar, representing the clay bricks which were made by our people in Egypt."

This sweet mixture represents bitter toil because even harsh labor is sweetened by the promise of redemption. We know that it was through Christ's bitter suffering that the sweetness of redemption also came to us; Hebrews 2:9; *"But we see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."*

"Shulchan Orech," or the Passover Supper. This is the time for the meal to be served, and the leader to hide the Affikomen.

After supper:

“Tzafun” or the eating of the **Affikomen**.

When the children search for the afikomen and find it, the leader redeems it by giving the child a coin. The broken matzah - found and returned - symbolizes life and resurrection. The matzah is broken and distributed, in olive size pieces, to each of the guests.

It was at this time that, “... *Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (Luke 22:29)*

The Affikomen was the final food of the Seder feast. It symbolized the Paschal lamb. It was considered the dessert, therefore all were instructed to *not eat anything afterwards*. It is significant that it was the middle piece of the “unity”, which was broken and hidden away, and also that upon eating it, *nothing more was needed*.

“Berach”, the third cup, is the cup of redemption, God proclaiming, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.”

The word redemption suggests the idea of a price being paid to buy someone out of slavery. The sacrificial lamb offered on Passover paid the price to deliver the nation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.

We know that Jesus drank this cup with His disciples and declared, “***Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins***” (Matthew 26:27-28).

It was this cup after the supper, which our Messiah used to symbolize His death. The scriptures tell us that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin (Heb 9:22). Old Testament scriptures refer to Jesus’ work on the cross in Isaiah 53: 5-6; “*But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*”

All drink the third cup of wine while reclining to the left.

Elijah’s Place. (The door is opened)

You will note that one place setting has not been touched throughout the meal. This is the traditional place for Elijah. As the ceremony draws to a close, one of the children goes to the door and peeks his head out to see if Elijah is coming.

"Is Elijah there?" the leader asks.

"No, he is not here," the child says.

"Maybe next year Elijah will come!" the leader replies.

According to Malachi 4:5-6, the Jewish people know that Elijah will prepare the way for the Messiah. When they ask if Elijah is coming, they are actually proclaiming that they are still

waiting for the Messiah. We recognize that John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord more than 2,000 years ago (Luke 1:13-17).

The door is closed.

The “**Hallel**” is the fourth and last cup - the cup of praise, which is God’s pronouncing, “I will take you to Me for a people.” This speaks of the time when the Lord will gather Israel again in the Lord. The Jewish people look forward to a golden age when everyone will be at peace and will be reunited with God.

To the believer in the Messiah this cup also represents the great hope that someday the Messiah is coming back to take up His followers to be with Him, as it is written; *“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”* (1 Thess 4:16-17)

All drink of the fourth cup, leaning to the left.

Many believe Jesus did not drink of this last cup, as the prophecies it foretells have not yet come true.

Perhaps this was His meaning when Jesus said, *“For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”* (Luke 22:18)

The Seder of Passover is now complete, even as our salvation and redemption are complete. Just as we were privileged to celebrate it this year, so may we be privileged to do so, (all say in unison); **NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!**

Though the meal was finished, Jesus was not finished preparing His disciples for what was coming. He continued teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit, to not be afraid of what was coming. He then prayed one final time for them, recorded as His High Priestly Prayer in John 17. Judas had left by this time, agreeing with the religious leaders to betray Jesus into their hands.

*“When they had **sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”* (Matt 26:30)
(Psalms 113-118 are traditional Hallel songs)

Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives and into the garden of Gethsemane, where He asked them to *“Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”* He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, *“Father, if You are willing, take this **cup** from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”* (Luke 22:42)

Did this “cup” remind Him of one of the cups of the Seder, perhaps the cup of redemption, or the cup of judgment? He might have been thinking of the last cup, the cup of praise, knowing His life was to be a poured-out cup of praise to God. He might have linked it to the “cup of wrath,” spoken graphically in Isaiah 51:17; “...*you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of His wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger.*” If so, no wonder He did not drink it during the Seder. He knew He would soon drink the cup of God’s wrath poured out full strength upon sin, which He Himself would bear in His body on the cross. He did that for you and me, so that we would not have to drink the cup of wrath due our sins.

Jesus might also have had in mind a familiar **Roman method of execution of soldiers** who were sentenced to death, which involved the use of a cup. The men sentenced to die were lined up, the first man given "a full cup of hemlock or some other deadly poison that created great pain in accordance to the amount that he drank. If this first man had the courage, heart, and compassion, he could drink the full measure of the cup, 'to its bitter dregs,' and suffer all the pains of the poison himself. If he did, the rest of the men would go free. If he did not, the next man must drink the poison also - and he had the same choice as the first man, to drink the full measure of the poison and suffer its pains for the rest of his companions, or he could let them suffer the pains of their portions of the poison. Each man to whom the cup was passed had the same choice. If this was the cup our Lord spoke to His Father about in the Garden, then the symbolism is obvious." (*The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*, James M. Freeman)

When Jesus had finished praying, Judas came with “*a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders*” (Mark 14:43).

Jesus was taken to the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, all in the space of a few hours, and at night. It was against their own law to put a man on trial during the night.

Pilate washed his hands of the guilt of condemning an innocent man, and the soldiers took Jesus away to mock Him and to beat Him. Peter denied his Lord and Judas hung himself. Then, Jesus died.

No ordinary death, it was accompanied by thick darkness for 3 hours, and by an earthquake that shook nearby graves open. The thick curtain in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, and a trembling Roman centurion declared, “Truly this was the Son of God.” His disciples and the women took Jesus’ body off the cross and placed Him in a tomb nearby, intending to prepare His bloodied body for burial after their Sabbath. So, they went to their homes to mourn their loss and wonder what they would do without their Lord and Friend. Their Passover Lamb had been slain, His blood applied, God’s death angel had past overhead.