

Introduction to Passover and the Appointed Times



God's Appointed Times—*Moadim* (מועדים)

In Leviticus 23:2 and elsewhere in the Torah the special Feast days are called, "The LORD's appointed times." The Hebrew word *moed*, מועד (plural, *moadim*—מועדים) is used and translated in English variously as "feasts" (NKJ), "appointed feasts" (NIV), "appointed times" (NASB), and "fixed times" (JPS Tanach). The term *moadim* is, however, probably best translated as "appointed times." These are special times that God has set in place on Israel's national calendar. On these fixed days, annually, monthly, and weekly, He promises to meet with His people in a unique way. It is noteworthy that the singular, *moed* (מועד), is also used to refer to the place of community worship and meeting—the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). It is called *ohel moed* (אהל מועד) or "tent of meeting" because God met with His people there in an extraordinary way. What a remarkable thing—the eternal God, the Creator of the universe, so desires to meet with His people that He makes special appointments with us for this very purpose! How can we ignore them?

Feast—*Chag* (חג)

The Torah uses a second word to describe at least three of the *moadim*. In Deuteronomy 16:16 we read, "Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed." We see that these times of Unleavened Bread, Shavuot, and Sukkot are all referred to as "feasts." The Hebrew word for "feast" is *chag* (pronounced: *haag*)—חג. In addition, the Torah text implies that it is a pilgrimage feast. In Exodus 23:17 we read, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD God." These three occasions are at Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Hence, by identifying each of these three special days as a *chag*, we understand that the Torah is teaching us that there are special *moadim* singled out and designated as feast and festival days, which are to be celebrated in a distinctive way in Jerusalem. Of course, even in ancient Israel, many people were not able to make the journey up to Jerusalem, especially those who lived outside of Israel. In the same manner, most people today cannot make the trip for one of the Feasts, let alone for all three of them. This, however, should in no way hinder us from celebrating these Feasts where we live.



Chag Sameach!

Passover



Remembering our Redemption

In the Days of Israel

The two *moadim*, Pesach and Unleavened Bread, are very closely connected. The day of Pesach is one specific day that is to be remembered throughout the history of Israel. "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD." (Exodus 12:12) This passage relates the importance of Pesach—it is the time to remember the final plague, the slaying of the firstborn. At Pesach, the Angel of Death went from house to house, both Egyptian and Israelite, and slew the firstborn. However, as God instructed, any house that had the blood of a Pesach lamb smeared upon it was protected from death and its inhabitants lived. They were then to eat that sacrificial lamb in combination with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Moreover, the Israelites were told to eat it quickly because the plague of the firstborn triggered the second aspect of this historical event, the Exodus of the Israelite slaves from Egypt. On that first Pesach, God was going to take them out of Egypt and slavery by a miraculous deliverance.

Thus, beginning that same night and lasting for seven full days, the Israelites were also instructed to celebrate a Feast of Unleavened Bread, *Chag HaMatzot*. The text in Exodus says, "You shall also observe the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt;

therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance." (Exodus 12:17) The text indicates that, whereas Pesach specifically was given to remember the plague of the firstborn and the deliverance from it through trust in the blood of the Pesach sacrifice, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was given to specifically remember the actual event of the Exodus. This was accomplished by eating unleavened bread for a whole week. This bread (called *matzah*) recalls a time of haste when the children of Israel were fleeing from the Egyptians with no time to wait for their bread to rise.

Today, for all intents and purposes, this entire festival season, all seven days, is called "Passover" or Pesach. For simplicity and brevity, we will continue to use this terminology, however one should note that biblically they are two separate, yet connected, *moadim*. Pesach is one day and specifically remembers the slaying of the firstborn and the salvation through the blood of the lamb. Unleavened Bread begins on Pesach and lasts one week. It is marked by eating bread made without leaven. Its purpose is to commemorate the rushed exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, fleeing to freedom. In other words, the slogan is absolutely correct which says: "Pesach/Passover is the Season of our Freedom." It is the time when the people of Israel remember how God delivered them from death and slavery, and began to form the large family of ex-slaves into a free and independent nation.



In the Days of Messiah

According to the teaching of the Apostolic Scriptures, the *moadim* of Pesach and Unleavened Bread picture certain aspects of the sacrificial work of Yeshua. In I Corinthians 5:7 we read: "Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For *Messiah our Pesach* also has been sacrificed." (italics ours) The writer was clearly explaining that we are to understand the Pesach in terms of what it can teach us about the person and/or work of Messiah. However, we must remember that such a Messianic understanding in no way negates the historical interpretation of these *moadim*. Here are some of the parallels between Passover/Unleavened Bread and the foreshadowing of the Messiah:

Slavery—Just as the Israelites were helpless and down-trodden slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, we too were down-trodden in our slavery to sin, (Romans 6). Moreover, just as the Israelites could not deliver themselves from such servitude, neither were we able to free ourselves from bondage to sin.

Pharaoh and Egypt—The Israelite slaves were sorely and cruelly oppressed by Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It took a while for the effects of Egypt to be cleansed from their lives and minds. Spiritually, it is the same way with believers in Yeshua. Pharaoh and Egypt serve as accurate illustrations of the harsh and cruel slavery of the world's system into which we were all born. After we become believers in Yeshua, our sanctification involves a lifelong process of freeing us from the effects of that system that once so horribly enslaved us.

The Pesach Lamb—Yeshua is specifically referred to in I Corinthians 5 as our Passover Lamb, or Pesach. Just as the blood of that first

lamb protected the people from the effects of the plague of death of the firstborn, so too, does the blood of Messiah, spiritually applied to the doors of our hearts, protect us from eternal death.

The Food—The Scriptures instruct us to celebrate Pesach by having a *seder* meal with three main foods featured on the menu:

The Roasted Pesach Lamb—The Israelites were to eat the slain Pesach sacrifice roasted. Moreover, they were to have this meal together with other families, the whole nation sitting down to eat at the same time. Likewise, all who believe and trust in Messiah accept Him into their lives both as individuals and as a larger community of believers.

The Bitter Herbs—The bitter herbs reminded the Israelites of how bitter it was to be slaves in Egypt. In the same way, eating the bitter herbs also reminds us of how bitter it was to be enslaved to sin.

The Unleavened Bread—After God spared the lives of all whose houses were marked by the blood of the Pesach sacrifice, He commanded them to eat with haste, pack their belongings, and leave Egypt quickly—so quickly that there would be no time for their bread to rise. Consequently, they were to eat only unleavened bread. Hence, eating this *matzah* (unleavened bread) for one week reminded the Israelites of their hasty departure from slavery in Egypt. In the same way, eating *matzah* for the week of Pesach can also remind all believers of that same historical event. Furthermore, it serves to remind us that one of the many benefits of Yeshua's death is that He freed us from sin. We are new creations, without the 'leaven' of sin as part of our basic constitution and are therefore, no longer slaves to sin.



Redemption, Deliverance, Sanctification

Pesach is a season rich in theology. There are three theological terms that are frequently used to describe the historical events at Pesach: redemption, deliverance, and sanctification. Their spiritual significance is clear.

Redemption and Deliverance—The first and foremost soteriological (salvation) doctrine connected with Pesach is the doctrine of redemption and deliverance—the releasing of slaves and bringing them into freedom. This is, of course, the main message of Pesach. As totally helpless slaves, the children of Israel needed a redeemer! They were subsequently freed from the yoke of their slavery so that they could serve their new master, the Lord their God. In a parallel manner, the Apostolic Scriptures describes the cruel tyranny of slavery to sin. So dominant was sin that we were described as not only slaves to it (Romans 6), but also spiritually dead in it! (Ephesians 2) Moreover, because of the strength with which sin held us, it required someone else to redeem us. We could not do it ourselves. Thus, God sent Messiah Yeshua to atone for our sins. The *blood of Messiah* is the ransom price paid to set us free. The Spirit of God quickened us, bringing us to life and into life. He applied the atonement individually to our lives, and identified us with Messiah's death, burial, and resurrection. Moreover, Ephesians 2 says that even the ability to believe in Yeshua to receive this accomplished redemption was a gift from God Himself.

Sanctification—One of the reasons the Lord redeemed and delivered Israel was to set them apart from the rule of sin so that they could wholly serve Him. That is, after all, what Moshe was continually demanding of Pharaoh when he said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go so that they may serve Me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 7:16) The meaning here is that the Lord intended to sanctify Israel. He set Israel apart from the rest of their immediate world (Egypt) and brought them unto Himself so that they could serve Him. This is what the Scripture means when it calls Israel "a holy nation." Holiness does not simply refer to their actions or lifestyle as much as it reflects the fact that the Lord separated them unto Himself to be who they *are*—His set apart, holy people, living to serve Him. In the same way, God set us apart from the very beginning and chose us to inherit eternal life. Then at an appointed time in history, Messiah died for our sins. Who we once were, was put to death in Him and who we now are—a new creation born from above—was risen in Messiah (Romans 6:1–6). We are now called to be sanctified, or set apart for Him. Thus, we can see that our full redemption, deliverance, and sanctification, from the Exodus until today, is an outpouring of His mercy from the beginning to the end.

As we together set this appointed time of the Pesach season aside, especially to focus on these truths, it can only blossom forth into an unparalleled time of praise and worship of our God and Redeemer. 

"And they sung a new song, saying, 'You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!'" (Revelation 5:9)

The Traditional Seder

The Hebrew word *seder* (סדר) means “order.” All that is done on this night that is “not like any other night” is done in a special and important order that corresponds directly with the events of our Exodus from slavery to freedom.

The Seder Plate

This is the central feature on the *seder* table. It is generally a large, round plate containing six items of food. These items might seem plain, even trivial, yet their simplicity embodies meaningful lessons. This in itself reflects a core element of our Redeemer’s ways: He turns the simple into the meaningful; the mundane into the holy. The items are:

A Shankbone — *Zeroah*

This represents the Passover Lamb sacrificed on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt.

A chicken leg or neck is generally used to symbolize God’s outstretched arm in liberating our people.

A Roasted Egg — *Beitzah*

The egg is to remember the festival offering presented in the days that the Temple was standing. It is a symbol of mourning that we are not able to make that offering today, and in many traditions the meal begins by dipping the egg into salt water, which represents tears. At the same time, we look forward to the day when our Redemption is complete and Mes-

seh is ruling from Jerusalem as King of all the earth and He will wipe away the tears from every eye!

Bitter Herbs — *Maror*

This is usually on the plate as a piece of horseradish root or chopped horseradish paste. The more bitter it is the better, so as to remind us of the bitterness of our former bondage—whether as slaves in Egypt or as slaves to sin!

Its inclusion on the *seder* plate fulfills the instruction: “They shall eat it (the Pesach offering) with *matzah* and bitter herbs.” (Numbers 9:11). According to a tradition instituted by Rabbi Hillel, horseradish is scooped between two pieces of *matzah*, but we add a scoop of sweet *charoset* to remind us that the Almighty enables us to transform bitterness into sweetness, just as He did then, does now, and always will do.

Vegetable — *Karpas*

This is a raw vegetable, usually a potato or an onion, which alludes to crushing labor, back-breaking work. Yet it is also symbolic of our potential for growth and rebirth, as is the season of Spring when the *seder* takes place.

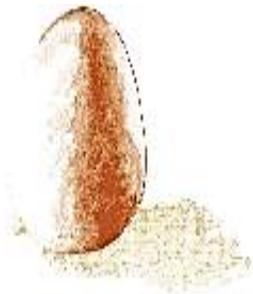
Sweet Paste — *Charoset*

Charoset is a mixture of chopped fruit (apples, pears, dates and nuts, and a little grape juice or wine), which resembles mortar and is symbolic of the mortar used to make bricks when our ancestors were enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. It reminds us that our faithful Father does not give us more than we can bear, and He makes a way out of adversity for us.

Romaine Lettuce — *Chazeret*

This reminds us of our ancestors’ exile in Egypt that began in a pleasant manner but ended in bitter slavery. (Isn’t that so typi-





BEITZAH

cal of the nature of sin?) Romaine lettuce is used as it has plain leaves but a bitter stalk and roots.

The following important elements are also integral to the traditional *seder* meal.

The Haggadah

This booklet contains the story of the Exodus, the order of the *seder* meal, and wonderful songs to sing. Everyone should have one! Children are the most important participants of the meal. The adults' role is to remember this redemptive testimony in order to tell it to the children. Thus, many interesting customs are scattered throughout the story to encourage the children to ask questions. On this night, it is the children who remind us that we are all the children of our *Abba*, ("Father") and our faith should be as pure, trusting and unquestioning as a child's.

The Four Glasses of Wine

We drink four glasses of wine, or grape juice, during the *seder*. Each one recalls a different aspect of our exodus and redemption. *First glass*: our physical exit from the boundaries of Egypt. *Second glass*: our delivery from Egyptian slavery. *Third glass*: God's creation of His nation—an inherently free and redeemed people. *Fourth glass*: our covenant with God as His people at Sinai seven weeks later, when we received



MAROR

His Torah—the purpose and goal of our Exodus.

The Cup of Elijah

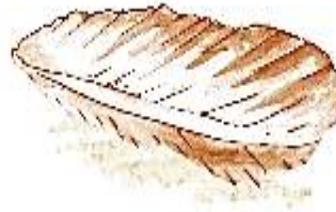
Traditionally, it is said that the prophet Elijah—who will usher in Messiah and herald the ultimate Redemption—visits every *seder* table. In anticipation of his visit, we have a fifth glass of wine filled and at a certain moment toward the end of the *seder* we leave the door open to invite him in, and show that as free people we need have no fear.

The Three Matzot

Matzah is bread made in 18 minutes or less, before the yeast is activated and the dough has time to rise. It is the same hastily prepared, unleavened bread which was eaten before leaving Egypt.

It reflects the total dependence of one who, roused by Divine truth, follows God into the desert with nothing but his faith and commitment.

The opposite of *matzah* is *chametz*—bread or other products containing yeast or leaven. Grain products such as wheat, barley, oats, rye and spelt, when mixed with water, are also avoided by the Ashkenazim (Jews from Eastern Europe), but are permitted by Sephardim (Jews originally from Morocco, Syria and other countries along the Mediterranean). Because *cha-*



CHAZERET

metz rises, it represents inflated egotism and arrogance, which is the true spiritual leaven in our lives—the removal of which is stressed at Pesach.

There are three very special *matzot* that are placed on top of each other and placed next to the *seder* plate. They are usually put in a special bag with three separate pockets. During the meal the middle *matzah* is removed, lifted up—unleavened, pierced, and bruised in appearance—and broken in two unequal pieces. The larger piece is folded in a white cloth/napkin and hidden.

This is called the *afikoman*, and traditionally it represents the Pesach Lamb that was eaten at the conclusion of the meal. At the end of the meal, all the children search for the hidden *afikoman* with great excitement, as a special treat awaits the one who finds it. When found, it is passed around and all those present eat a small piece in order to close the meal.

What an amazingly clear illustration of the One who was broken and "bruised for our iniquity," hidden at present, but Who will be found again and shared by all Israel—when we shall all see Him "face to face" as He is!

As we leave the *seder*, we leave with the taste of the *afikoman matzah* in our mouths—the taste of faith, our Creator's covenant commitment, and His mighty plan of redemption. 



KARPAS



CHAROSET



ZEROAH

Removing the Leaven



There are two words in Hebrew that we interpret as “leaven.” *Se’or* refers to a leavening agent itself, that is, yeast. *Chametz* is the term used for food and drink items that contain leaven. The type of unleavened bread that the Scriptures refer to is called *matzah*.

- ✎ *SE’OR*: a leavening agent
- ✎ *CHAMETZ*: a leavened food item
- ✎ *MATZAH*: an unleavened type of bread

Let’s consider some of the passages in Scripture that use these terms:

For seven days no leaven (se’or) shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened (chametz), that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened (chametz); in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread (matzah). (Exodus 12:19-20)

In context, the above commandment is mentioned only in connection with the very first Passover observance. These verses below specifically relate to annual observance of the festival:

And Moses said to the people: “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened items (chametz) shall be eaten. (Exodus 13:3)

Unleavened bread (*matzah*) shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened items (*chametz*) shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven (*se’or*) be seen among you in all your quarters. (Exodus 13:7) [It should be noted that the word “bread” is supplied in some translations, but this is not explicit in the text. The word *chametz* does not necessarily refer only to bread.]

Therefore, we see that there are three commandments regarding leaven:

- ✎ Eat *matzah*
- ✎ Remove leaven (*se’or*) and leavened foods (*chametz*)
- ✎ Do not eat leavened foods (*chametz*)

Leaven and Fermentation

Se’or, “leaven,” comes from the root verb *sa’ar*, which means “to remain, to be left over.” This makes sense in the context of ancient near-eastern baking. In ancient times, you could not go to the store to buy a bag of yeast or a canister of baking powder.

To make leavened bread, you took a small lump of dough from the last batch of bread you baked, and mixed it into your new batch. The leaven contained in the small remnant would spread through the new batch, leavening the whole lump. Then, before baking the bread, you would take out a small piece of dough to be used in the next batch. This small piece is “left over” (*sa’ar*), and is therefore called *se’or*.

How did you get your first loaf of leavened bread without a remnant of *se’or* to mix into it? You would let the dough sit and ferment until it would rise on its own (which the Israelites didn’t have time to do). Yeast (*se’or*) is the natural result of the fermentation process.

Chametz, leavened food, comes from the root verb *chamatz*, which means, “to become sour.” In fact, the word for vinegar in Hebrew is actually *chometz*. Therefore we can see that this is also a reference to the fermentation process.

Therefore, leavening, as it regards these commandments, is not really the process of expansion or filling with air as we have come to understand it in modern times, but the process of fermentation.

What Foods are *Chametz*?

The traditional interpretation of *chametz* is any flour of the five biblical species of grain:

wheat, oats, spelt, barley, and rye, which has been combined with moisture and allowed to sit (and therefore ferment) before baking is completed. This is even true of flour to which no yeast has been added, since yeast occurs naturally as a result of the fermentation process. Naturally, there had to be a line drawn to decide how long flour could sit after being combined with moisture, so rabbinic authority has determined a safe amount of time as eighteen minutes (though there are variations).

Obviously, traditional sandwich breads are leavened and must be removed. But in fact, even flatbreads such as pita, pancakes, and tortillas are removed from the house, because fermentation may have occurred in them. Noodles and cereals are removed.

Beer, whiskey and the like are also fermented grain products. (Vodka is made from potatoes so it's kosher.)

Baking soda operates on a completely different principle from yeast, so it is neither *se'or* nor *chametz*. Therefore, baking soda itself need not be removed from the house.

Medicines that contain any kind of *chametz* are not prohibited on Passover.

In general, inedible items that may contain *chametz* need not be removed from the house.

Wine and vinegar (other than grain vinegar) are not considered *chametz*, because they are not made from grain products.

Ashkenazi Jewish authorities (Eastern European) have additional stringencies on Passover. They prohibit additional items

such as corn, rice, beans, and peas: foods that can be cooked in a similar way to *chametz* grains. These prohibited foods are called *kitniyot* (or *kitniyos* with an Ashkenazi accent). The main reason for this prohibition is that their similarity (particularly when ground into flour) may cause confusion. Also, some authorities even prohibit derivatives from *kitniyot*, such as corn syrup. The stringency of prohibiting *kitniyot* is recognized as not being a Torah commandment, but only a Rabbinic enactment.

Not every community holds to this prohibition, however. Sephardic Jewish authorities (Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern, generally speaking) do not prohibit any of the *kitniyot* items during Passover. 

Specifics of Observing Unleavened Bread

Exodus 12:15-20; Exodus 13:7, 9; 1 Corinthians 5:8

Passover Leaven Cleaning List

The main leavening agent:

 Yeast

Common household items, which may contain leavening agents:

- Seasoning mixes
- Pre-packaged foods (including vegetarian meat substitutes)
- Health food products (brewer's yeast or nutritional yeast)
- Alcoholic beverages (beers, wines) unless they say "Kosher for Passover"
- Pet foods (and some cat litters)

Common places where leaven may be found around the home:

- In and under the refrigerator/freezer/stove
- In pantries and cabinets
- Toaster/Toaster Oven
- Microwave
- Spills/crumbs in cabinets/drawers
- Garbage cans
- Under couches and cushions
- Automobiles
- Anywhere food may have been eaten or taken
- Carpet (under dining room table)

The Four Cups

*"I am Adonai
and I will..."*

- ...bring you out
- ...deliver you from their bondage
- ...redeem you with an outstretched arm
- ...take you for My People ...and be your God



Also known as *Z'man Ch'ruteinu* (זמן חרותינו — the "Time of Our Freedom") or simply Pesach (פסח), Passover is the time when family and friends gather around the table to retell the story of God's mighty hand of redemption as He brought us out of the house of slavery and made us free to serve Him.

Over the centuries the Passover Seder has grown with new and meaningful traditions, but the core of the celebration is ancient. The *Mishnah* (200 CE), for instance, lists all of the major sections of the Passover Seder used even in modern times. So set was the framework around which the *seder* was sculpted that it is traditional to begin by singing a song made up of the first words of each section, a kind of 'musical table-of-contents' of what is to come in the evening's celebration.

This ancient 'table-of-contents' sung at the beginning of the Passover Seder begins with *Kaddesh*—the first of four cups

which all will drink at designated points throughout the *seder*. Why were four cups of wine deemed necessary for the Passover celebration? Other major festivals involve only the standard cup of wine at the initiation of the festival day as a sign of joy and sanctification. The opening celebration of Passover, however, has traditionally incorporated four cups, not just one.

The answer lies in the keen perception of the sages as they read the text of *Shemot* (Exodus), in which the entire story of the exodus from Egypt unfolds. Beginning with the premise that every word is of vital importance, and nothing is redundant, the teachers of old noted the remarkable text of Exodus 6:6-7:

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

Taken with the power of the four verbs that describe God's activity in the exodus event, the sages ordained four cups¹ in the meal of remembrance to commemorate God's work. The *Midrash* on these two verses gives us the historical background:

There are four expressions of redemption: I will bring you out—I will deliver you—I will redeem you and I will take you. These correspond to the four decrees that Pharaoh issued regarding them. The Sages accordingly ordained four cups to be drunk on the eve of Passover to correspond with these four expressions, in order to fulfill the verse: I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. (Psalm 116:13)²

The Jerusalem Talmud expands on this:

*Why do we have four cups of wine? R. Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Benayah, this refers to four stages in the redemption... "I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt." Even if He had left us in Egypt to be slaves, He would have ceased the burdensome yoke. For this alone we would have been grateful to Him and therefore we drink the first cup. "I will deliver you from their slavery." We drink the cup of salvation for he delivered us completely from serving them. "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm..." Because he confused them and crushed them on our behalf so that they could no longer afflict us, we drink the third cup. "I will take you..." The greatest aspect of the redemption is that He brought us near to Him and granted us also spiritual redemption. For this we raise the fourth cup."*²

While other explanations have been given for the four cups, the most common has been to base the tradition upon the four activities of God as described in Exodus 6:6-7. Thus, the four cups represent God's saving activity, one cup for each of God's sovereign acts as He fought against Pharaoh and the pagan gods—four cups outlining the work of God on behalf of His firstborn son, Israel.⁴

While various names have been given to each of the four cups in various *haggadot*, the names usually associated with them are the Cup of Sanctification, the Cup of Deliverance (or salvation), the Cup of Redemption, and the Cup of Hope (or expectation).

The Cup of Sanctification

I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

First in the list of God's activities in the exodus event is this promise to free the Israelites from the burden of the Egyptians—the slavery to which the Israelites had been subjected and the hardships that this slavery produced. But it was more than the sum of the nation's woes at the hand of her slave-masters that necessitated God's intervention. As slaves of Egypt, Israel could not worship God as He had instructed her, nor as she desired. Israel's primary distinction was her worship of the God of her fathers—a worship

that would cause the nations who saw her to marvel.⁵ But as slaves of the Egyptians, Israel was unable to worship God as she should. Her marked difference was clouded by her inability to live as God intended.

Therefore God makes this first promise, that He would separate her from the burden of the Egyptians, and we know that His purpose in doing so was that Israel might worship Him unfettered. Each time the famous line is spoken, "Let My people go," it is followed with "so that they might serve me."⁶ "Serve" (*avad*—עבד) and "service" (*avodah*—עבודה) are common Hebrew expressions for "worship."⁷

Since the exodus became the primary and foundational expression of God's redemptive activity, we are not surprised to see that in the progress of His revelation He teaches us that, even as He chose Israel, so He has chosen each and every person who comes to faith in Yeshua. Paul speaks of this as he opens his epistle to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of Adonetnu Yeshua HaMashiach, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Mashiach, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:3-4)

To be "holy and blameless before Him" is language of worship, for to come "before Him" means to abide in His presence, to be, as it were, engulfed in the glory of the *Shekinah*. The common terminology of the Torah describing the locus of the priests' work in the Tabernacle and Temple is "before the Lord."⁸ To picture the position of the believer in Yeshua as "holy and blameless before Him" is to speak in Torah-terms of the true service or worship of HaShem by those who are judged "clean" and therefore fit to come before God in worship.

Thus, the first cup marks Israel out as God's chosen ones—as the people for whom He would bring deliverance from under the burden of slavery, freeing them to worship and serve Him in spirit and in truth. And this is the same work He does for each and every child He brings into His family—He chooses them of His own sovereign will and sets about to free them from the shackles of slavery. This freedom from slavery is for this primary purpose: to worship Him as He intends. It is the calling of each and every child of God to be sanctified—set apart—unto God, to be given over to His worship and His worship alone. The first cup of Passover, the Cup of Sanctification, or separation, reminds us of this crucial starting point of our salvation.



"I am ADONAI, and I will bring you out..."

The Cup of Deliverance

I will deliver you from their bondage.

The first cup was attached to the phrase “I will bring you out (*ya'tzah*—יצא) from under the burdens (*stulah*—סבלה) of the Egyptians.” It might appear that this second phrase simply reiterates the same thing with a few changes in the words: “I will deliver (*na'tzal*—נצל) you from their bondage (*avodah*—עבודה).” A closer look, however, shows that this second phrase gives additional insights. “To bring out,” found in the first phrase, implies a change of status. “To deliver,” found here in the second phrase, suggests that Israel is helpless to affect the change herself. The Hebrew verb נצל—*natzal*, means “to rescue,” “to snatch away.”

One who needs to be rescued is someone who cannot affect his own deliverance—someone who must seek help outside of himself. Left by itself, the first clause could have suggested a picture in which Israel and God work together to extricate her from the burden of slavery. This second phrase, however, makes it clear that Israel was helpless, and needed to be rescued. Every time we raise the second cup of the *seder* and bless the Lord for our salvation, we need to be reminded that our deliverance was all of His

doing—we were helpless to secure our own rescue.

Additionally, the word “burdens” of the first clause suggests that which is uncomfortable and weartsome. But the English “bondage” of the second phrase is translated as such from the Hebrew *avodah* (עבודה)—the common word for “work” but which can also mean “worship.” Israel, imprisoned under the yoke of Egypt, was in danger of falling prey to her idolatrous worship. This fact is made all the more clear when, after the exodus, Israel comes to Mt. Sinai as God promised Moses (Shemot 3:12). When Moses lingered upon the mountain, Israel, following the ways of the Egyptians, made a golden calf not unlike the idols they saw in Egypt. Israel had come to believe that other gods actually did exist, and that maybe, just maybe, they were as powerful as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was; perhaps even more powerful. When Moses failed to return as soon as they thought he should, they supposed that the other gods had won the day, and that Moses, along with his God, had perished. What was left for them to do but show their willingness to serve these other gods? And so they made the calf, declaring that the god it represented had, in fact, brought them out of Egypt. It is clear that this manner of think-

ing resulted from being influenced by paganism. Israel surely needed to be “rescued” from the “service” of Egypt, because the tentacles of idolatry had already entwined and penetrated her national consciousness.

How this same picture fits each and everyone who is born from above! Our bondage to sin leaves us unable to rescue ourselves. We simply cannot find our way to freedom because of our idolatry—the chains of self-centeredness which shackle us. Our only hope is that One stronger than our fetters should come in and deliver us from our prison. Paul speaks of this when he writes in Colossians 1:13–14:

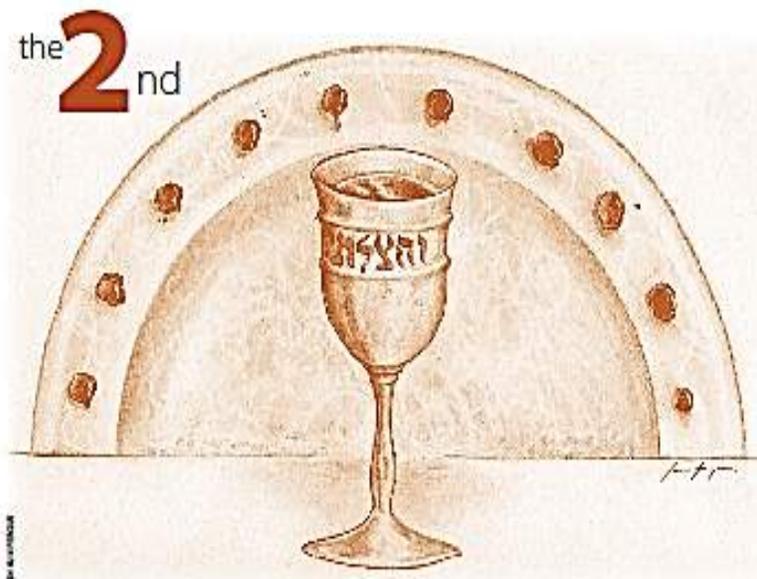
For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The second cup reminds us, then, that we were in great need of deliverance, for our own idolatry so bound us as to be unable to affect our own rescue. God's deliverance was (and is) our only hope. Understanding the second cup in this way makes it clear why Luke begins his report of Yeshua's last Passover *seder* with the Second Cup (Luke 22:14–17). He wants to emphasize that Yeshua is our Deliverer.

The Cup of Redemption

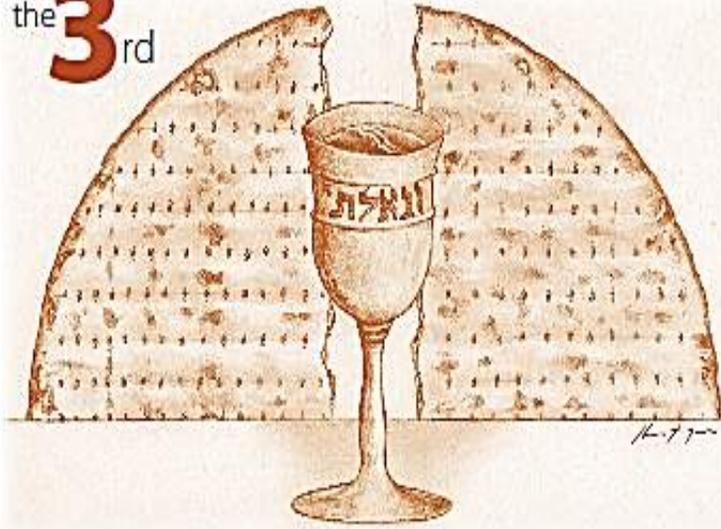
I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

In this third phrase, linked with the third cup, we have a most important word—an additional insight to the work of God in the salvation of Israel, a salvation that became the eternal paradigm for God's full plan of salvation for sinners. Even as the first verb, “bring out,” was amplified by the next verb, “to deliver,” so the concept of “deliver” is narrowed and described further by the central word in this phrase, “redeem.” For while “bring out” could imply the mutual efforts of Israel and God, the word “deliver” makes it clear that the rescue of Israel from her bondage was entirely God's work. What the word “redeemed” now adds to the picture is that this deliverance was brought about by the payment of a price within a family setting.



“I will deliver you from their bondage”

the 3rd



“I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm”

The concept of redemption in the Hebrew scriptures is primarily represented by two words, *ga'al* (גאל) the word in our present text, and *padah* (פדה) likewise rendered “ransom” or “redeem” by the translators. The Greek word *lutron* (λυτρον) and the verb which underlies it, *lutroo* (λυτροω), translate *ga'al* (גאל) 45 times in the LXX (Septuagint), and *padah* (פדה) 42 times. This same Greek word is used to convey the idea of “ransom” or “redeem” in the Apostolic writings.³ So what is the difference between גאל and פדה—particularly since the Septuagint translators seem to consider them fairly synonymous?

The primary difference is that *ga'al* is regularly found in the context of familial relations, while *padah* simply means “to ransom by payment of a price” without reference to relationship. Morris notes about *ga'al*: “The word has about it a family air, and this is never quite lost in the various shades of meaning which it ultimately embraces.”¹⁰ Thus, *ga'al* is used of redeeming a family member, often from slavery.¹¹ Further proof of this familial aspect of the word is the fact that it often means the “avenger of blood.”¹² The avenger of blood, by very definition, was someone near of kin. Thus, when the word *ga'al* is used here in our text, it emphasizes the very important fact that God viewed Israel as family when He set about to redeem her.

Israel did not become “family” through His redemptive acts; Israel already was family—God’s firstborn son.

But equally important is the manner in which this phrase describes God’s redemption of Israel: He redeemed Israel “with an outstretched arm and great judgments.” What exactly does this picturesque language, “with an outstretched arm” mean?

The phrase is found 16 times in the *Tanakh*,¹³ the majority of these in Deuteronomy. The phrase is almost always used in connection with the exodus event, and is in parallel with the idea of unmatched power and greatness. Even in the text at hand, the phrase is linked with the idea of “great judgments.” The “hand” or “arm” is symbolic in Hebrew for “power” generally, and thus an “outstretched arm” pictures power at its zenith—extreme power. This metaphor is used in connection with creation,¹⁴ divine judgment,¹⁵ and especially in connection with the exodus.

“Why,” we might ask, “does redemption require such extreme power?” In fact, this becomes the point of the metaphor. The redemption of Israel from Egypt is no less an act of sovereign power than is the creation of the universe. Only One able to speak the worlds into existence could ever have redeemed Israel from Egypt. Redemption is, in the final analysis, the greatest display of

God’s omnipotence, that our human minds can comprehend, for it is ultimately the victory of good over evil, the conquest of righteousness over unrighteousness.

But there is one more aspect of the word *ga'al* which must be considered here. The word itself always implies the payment of a price in order to affect redemption. If we were to ask what price was paid in the creation event, the answer would be none. Though the creation was an expression of God’s “outstretched arm,” it was done without apparent cost to the Creator. But redemption, while requiring the same extension of God’s power to affect, requires payment of a price—redemption cost God something. Here, of course, we come to understand the necessity of the Pesach lamb, whose blood was applied to the door in order to affect the protection of the Israelite family, and ultimately their redemption out of Egypt. The cost to God is nothing short of the giving of His own life (as symbolized in the slaying of the lamb), for redemption requires the payment of a price, and by the very standard of His justice that price is life-for-life.

Thus, to the first cup, which symbolized God’s choosing of Israel for His own, is added the second cup, emphasizing Israel’s utter helplessness to rescue herself. To this picture is now added the third cup and the idea of God as Father paying the necessary price to redeem His firstborn son. The picture turns from mere legal transactions in freeing a slave, to the heart of a Father toward His own children, and His willingness to pay the necessary price to have them back, even when that price is most costly. That price was nothing less than the giving of His own dear Son, Yeshua, emphasized by His identification with the third cup as symbolic of His own blood shed for the redemption of sinners, (Luke 22:20).

The Cup of Hope

*Then I will take you for My people,
and I will be your God...*

The fourth cup is connected in the traditional Passover Seder with the coming of Elijah the Prophet. In modern times, the fourth cup is filled, and the door opened “for Elijah.”¹⁶ Also connected with the fourth cup

the 4th



“I will take you for My People ...and be your God”

are the reciting of Hallel Psalms (Psalms 115–118) and the Great Hallel (Psalm 136).

Connected as it is with the fourth phrase of our Exodus text, the fourth cup takes on the character of hope for a future when all of Israel is in the Land, her enemies are subdued, and peace reigns. The calling for Elijah emphasizes that such a peaceful scene can only be fathomed in connection with the coming of the Messiah.

What the fourth cup adds to the picture of the first three is that redemption, while securing the freedom and safety of Israel, does not immediately place her into the realm of eternal peace. She is redeemed from Egypt and given her freedom, but now she must make her way through wilderness and foreign lands before she reaches the Promised Land. Redemption guarantees the final destination, but the journey is still necessary.

What is more, the history of Israel shows that from the time of our exodus out of Egypt, never has the nation as a whole willingly worshiped God as He desires. Early in our trek to the Promised Land we demonstrated that we were not free of our idolatry. And our history, illustrious as it may be at times, is strewn with waywardness and rebellion. We have not wholeheartedly, as a nation, fulfilled the words of this fourth cup, “I will take you for My people, and I will be your God.” While this has certainly been true of individuals in

every generation who have made up a believing remnant,¹⁷ the nation as a whole has never been characterized by genuine worship of God. It is to this that Jeremiah points in his “new covenant” prophecy.¹⁸ For there is coming a time when all of Israel, from the least to the greatest, will “know God,”¹⁹ terminology which must mean “have genuine covenant relationship with God,” not merely have intellectual knowledge about Him.²⁰

This fourth cup, then, envisions the time when true Israel and all those who have attached themselves to her via faith, will worship God in truth, and will be known in every way as His people. This final cup reminds us that our redemption is not fully realized yet, and though we enjoy the realities of it in the present, the future still holds our full and final redemption.²¹

Summary of the Four Cups

The four cups of the Passover Seder, based upon the verses from Exodus 6:6–7, paint this picture for us:

First, that God chose us to be His holy (separated) people. To accomplish this He promised to unburden us from our enemy’s entanglements.

Second, that we cannot affect our own release and that in our helpless state we must trust in God and in Him alone for our salvation.

Third, God further reveals to us that His sovereign work of salvation necessitates both divine power and payment. Our salvation would cost Him dearly, even the life of the Lamb.

And finally, in the fourth cup, God lets us know that the redemption that is ours is still not fully complete. We must await the future with hope of Messiah’s coming, for He alone can transform us fully into the holy people He has ordained. □

Endnotes

- 1 There have been some who have added a fifth cup to the standard tradition of four cups. Maimonides, for example, added the fifth cup and considered it obligatory [*Laws of Hametz and Matzah*, 8:10, as noted in Israel Ariele, *The Temple Haggadah*, Temple Institute, 1996, p. 59] on the basis that Exodus 6:8 adds a fifth phrase, “and I will bring you up.” This was interpreted as a promise to regather Israel at the building of the final Temple.
- 2 *Midrash Rabbah Exodus*, VI.4. Quoted from Soncino Edition.
- 3 Quoted from Ellyaho Kitov, *The Book of Our Heritage*, 3 volumes, Feldheim, 1988, p. 2.269.
- 4 Cf. Exodus 4:22.
- 5 Cf. Deuteronomy 4:5–8.
- 6 Exodus 4:23 says, “Let My son go.” Seven other times the phrase is the common, “Let My people go” (4:7, 16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7). But in each case the purpose is stated, “that they might serve Me...”
- 7 E.g., Exodus 3:12; I Kings 21:3, etc.
- 8 The phrase “before the Lord” is found 61 times in Leviticus alone.
- 9 *Lutron* (λutron) is found in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. *Lutran* (λutron) is found in Luke 24:21; Titus 2:4; I Peter 1:18.
- 10 Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Eerdmans, 1965), 20.
- 11 Cf. Leviticus 25:25–26, 48–49; Numbers 5:8.
- 12 Numbers 35:12ff; Deuteronomy 19:6ff; Joshua 20:3ff.
- 13 Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8; I Kings 8:42; II Kings 17:36; II Chronicles 6:32; Psalms 136:12; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17, 21; Ezekiel 20:33–34. In Jeremiah 21:5 the phrase “outstretched hand” is also found.
- 14 Jeremiah 32:17.
- 15 Jeremiah 21:5.
- 16 Chaim Raphael, *A Feast of History*, Gallery Books, 1972, p. 67.
- 17 Cf. Isaiah 10:22, and compare Romans 9:27.
- 18 Jeremiah 31:31ff.
- 19 Jeremiah 31:34.
- 20 For the use of “know” (יָדַע) in a covenant sense of “have loyalty to the covenant,” see H. B. Huffman, “The Treaty Background of Hebrew gah,” *BASOR* 118, 1966, pages 31–37 and his further note in *BASOR* 184, 1966, pages 36–38.
- 21 Note the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:20–25.

What is *this Service* to You?

Bread and wine are historically common elements of every meal. So what was going on behind the scenes that would motivate Yeshua to say 'this' bread and 'this' cup?

Many believers participate in 'breaking bread' together. And most services employ these verses while so doing.

...the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23b-26)

In this short passage of Scripture, the word 'this' is used six times alone. Is the word 'this' a reference to a church communion service? Probably not. Bread and wine are historically common elements of every meal. So what was going on behind the scenes that would motivate Yeshua to say 'this' bread and 'this' cup?

When He said 'this,' He was referring to the unleavened bread of Passover, one of the cups of Passover wine, the bitter herbs of Passover and the entire *seder* meal! In other words, He was saying, "Make Passover a memorial to Me."

Breaking Bread

One apparent conflict with the view that 'breaking of bread' always indicates a Passover meal is found in Acts 2:42, 46:



References to breaking bread occur throughout the *Talmud*. Obviously, these references do not mean partaking of the Eucharist.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart...

From these verses it may appear that the Apostles 'broke bread' every day. However, there is no reason to believe that breaking bread in this context refers to a ritual communion service.

"Breaking bread" is a very common term used in Judaism to refer to eating any meal together. Specifically, it refers to the traditional blessing before eating bread, which is often recited before a meal: "Blessed are You O Lord, our God Who brings forth bread from the Earth."

References to breaking bread occur throughout the *Talmud*. Obviously, these references do not mean partaking of the Eucharist. Here is one example.

When the time came to begin the meal, he said to R. Zera: "Will your honour please commence for us." He said to him: "Does not your honour accept the dictum of R. Johanan that the host should break bread?" So he [R. Abbahu] broke the bread for them. When the time came for saying grace he said to him [R. Zera], "Will your honour please say grace for us?" He replied: "Does your honour not accept the ruling of R. Huna from Babylon, who said that the one who breaks bread says grace?" (b. Berachot 46a)

"Saying grace" actually refers to the recitation of the *birkat hamazon* (blessing for the nourishment)—the blessing recited after a meal is eaten (Deuteronomy 8:10). The question being addressed in this section is regarding the roles and responsibilities of saying the blessing (breaking the bread) and leading the grace after meals.

Cup of Blessing

Let's look at another traditional communion passage: 1 Corinthians 10:15–17. Indeed, this is the passage from which the term "communion" is derived.

I speak as to wise men: Judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Messiah? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Messiah? (1 Corinthians 10:15–17)

Certainly Paul is not speaking of any general meal. Paul's references to Messiah's body and blood are sure connections to the meal Yeshua shared with His disciples before His death. But there are two key phrases in this text that indicate that Paul is indeed speaking of a Passover Seder.

First is the reference to the 'cup of blessing.' In a Passover meal, there are traditionally four cups of wine, which are derived from Exodus 6:6–7:

- The first is known as the *Kos Kiddush*, the Cup of Sanctification, because we drink it at the beginning of the night, setting apart the time as holy.
- The second cup is called the *Kos Ge'ulah*, the Cup of Redemption, so named because we drink it after telling the story of the Exodus.
- The third cup is the *Kos B'rakhah*, the Cup of Blessing, which we drink as we conclude the *Birkat Hamazon*, the grace after meals referenced above. It is drunk during the section of the *seder* known as *barekh*, which means, "blessing."
- The fourth and final cup is called the *Kos Hartzah*, the Cup of Completion, which we drink at the end of the meal.

The Cup of Blessing, the third cup that is taken after the *seder* meal, seems to be the one Yeshua used for His illustration. This is further substantiated by the gospel account

of the Passover meal, "He also took the cup after supper." (Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25)

The Bread Which We Break

The second phrase—"the bread which we break," found in the 1 Corinthians 10 passage—is markedly different from the other passages that refer to breaking bread, in that the bread itself is characterized by its breaking.

In the Passover Seder, there is a specific breaking of bread for a purpose other than eating. In the part of the *seder* known as *yachatz*, which means "breaking in half," the middle piece of three *matzot* is taken by the leader and broken in half. One half is wrapped in a linen cloth and hidden.

At the end of the meal, we read the section of the *haggadah* called *tzafun*, "hidden." At this time, the piece of *matzah* it is recovered, unwrapped and distributed among everyone present.

This bread, broken, wrapped, hidden, recovered and shared by all is called the *afikoman*. *Afikoman* is loan word from Greek whose actual identity has been lost. It is claimed by traditional Judaism that the word is either derived from *epikomot* ("dessert"), *epi komon* ("after-dinner entertainment") or *epikomton* ("festal song"). However, it seems likely that the source word is *afikomenos*, which means "the coming One." This word is actually used in a Second-Century Passover liturgy in reference to the Messiah.¹

The *afikoman* of Passover does an excellent job of "proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes." As disciples of Yeshua, we memorialize Him in our Passover service from the time we purge our homes of leaven to our final prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem. We do 'this' in remembrance of Him, as often as we eat the bread of affliction and drink the cup of blessing once a year, in the month of *Nisan*, on the night of the Passover Seder. ❏

Endnotes

- 1 Bishop Melito of Sardis, Section 66, *Peri tou Pascha* (On Passover), (2nd Century). Melito calls the Messiah "This One who is coming out of Heaven (*houtos afikomenos ex ouranon*) to the Earth."

Unblemished & Unleavened

O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?
Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who
walks with integrity... (Psalm 15:1-2)

The biblical Hebrew word for "integrity" is *tamim* (תָּמִים). It means "whole, sound, blameless, lacking nothing essential, consistent inside and out." It is the same word the Torah uses to describe a lamb suitable for a Passover sacrifice. "Your lamb shall be an unblemished (*tamim*, תָּמִים) male a year old..." (Exodus 12:5) Men, as we prepare our hearts for Passover, it is time to become that unblemished male of which the Torah speaks. It is time to become men of integrity.

Integrity is a life without secret corners. It is a life where we are holy whether or not anyone is watching—yet knowing someone always is.

Integrity means living in such a way that our most idealistic statements about what is right and true are not embarrassed by the record of our life. It means that in our unguarded moments, we are the same as when the crowds are watching. It means that when others know what we believe, they can predict our actions. And observing our actions, they have an accurate read-out of our beliefs.

Casting Out Leaven

On the night before the Passover, there is a custom to search for any remnants of leavened items in one's home. It is a ritual search conducted after dark. According to a very old tradition, one uses a candle, a feather, a wooden spoon and a linen cloth to search the house, even creeping along the floor to find a single crumb of bread. Any leaven that is found is swept with the feather onto the wooden spoon. When the search is completed, the feather, the spoon, the candle

and the leaven are all wrapped in the linen, tied up as a bundle and removed from the house, (*m.Pesachim* 1:1). The next morning (usually before the morning prayers) the bundle is burned.

Yet too often those of us who observe this ritual carefully search our homes for even the smallest speck of leavened bread, but we overlook the little concessions in our behavior that kill integrity.

Looking for Crumbs

For most men, integrity isn't difficult in the big things like avoiding murder or auto-theft. It's fudging on 'picky' rules which lead to little concessions that nibble away at our souls.

Here are a few examples of those 'crumbs' we should be on the lookout for as we search our souls scrupulously in preparation for Unleavened Bread. A man of integrity:

- ✦ Does not tell 'white lies' or finesse words to smooth out an awkward situation; he communicates honestly and directly.
- ✦ Does not believe in 'innocent' looks. If he is looking, he is not innocent any more.
- ✦ Does not let 'harmless misunderstandings' go unchallenged when they're to his benefit. For example, staying quiet while receiving credit for someone else's idea is deceitful.

Most people return a dollar of misgven change, but what would you do if it was only a nickel, and you didn't discover it until you reached home? Who cares about a nickel? A man of integrity does. If you're not committed to absolute honesty, then you just sold your integrity for a nickel! There was once



a news story about a 31 year-old guy who saw \$57,670 fall out of an armored car in front of him. He turned it in, because his mother had trained him to turn in nickels.

Integrity means noting all those 'picky' issues as significant in your heart. Integrity is challenged at the salad bar where your kids under 12 can eat for a small fraction of the adult price. How do you order for your 13-year-old who's short for his age? A man of integrity cannot cut corners anywhere, or he will tear a little hole out of his soul. It's like a little rip that gets longer and wider with every little selfish concession that is made.

Soul Searching

This search for leaven is a time for spiritual soul searching, a time for looking for the leaven and sin lurking in our own hearts. As we do, we must not overlook the little crumbs of leaven which typically go unnoticed, since they are as much leaven as a whole loaf of bread. These are the small blemishes which invalidate the lamb for the Passover sacrifice. We men of believing Torah communities should use the occasion of the casting out of the leaven to effect personal change. It is a powerful and evocative ritual, especially on the anniversary of our Master's suffering. He is the unblemished lamb—the lamb of integrity, and He calls us to live lives of integrity.

As we prayerfully prepare for Passover this year, we must be vigilant to remove all the leaven, even the little crumbs. Anything less is not real integrity. 

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the Torah and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Yeshua, led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate.

On the eve of Passover they hung [Yeshua] the Nazarene. For forty days a herald went before him and cried, "[Yeshua] the Nazarene is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and led Israel to heresy. Any one who knows anything to speak in his defense, let him come and explain for him." And none was found and nothing in his defense [was brought forward] and they hung him on the eve of the Passover.

(b.Sanhedrin 43a)

So begins Mark 15, probably one of the earliest composed and certainly one of the most solemnly told chapters of all the Gospels. It tells the story of one very long day. The chapter begins early in the morning, just before dawn as the mock Sanhedrin reached a guilty verdict regarding Yeshua. The chapter does not conclude until the sun had begun to set in the west, with the Sabbath coming and Yosef (Joseph) of Arimathea rolling the stone door of the tomb shut.

Very Early in the Morning 6:00–8:00 a.m.

Mark 15:1–14: Mark tells us that it was “very early in the morning” when they delivered Yeshua to Pilate. What was the rush? What motivated Calaphas and his Sadducean colleagues to convene their kangaroo-court¹ before dawn? Why go banging on Pilate’s door so early in the morning? If that day was (as the Gospel of John indicates) the morning of the 14th day of Nisan—the day the Passover lambs were to be slain—everyone had a busy day ahead.² The whole of the priesthood needed to be on duty by afternoon. Thousands and thousands of Israelites were soon to be converging on the Temple, and with them came the possibility of riot. Whatever was to be done with Yeshua needed to be done quickly and efficiently. Soon the streets would be packed with people making the preparation for their *seder* meals. Word of the proceedings

would spread through the city rapidly. The crowds loved Yeshua. They had even proclaimed Him their Messiah. In only a few short hours, all those hot-headed Galileans would be filling the streets, shouting and demanding the release of Yeshua.

Any later in the day and the Roman’s daily executions would have already been carried out. Yeshua would be left in custody over the Sabbaths and probably until the end of the festival. That would allow His followers time to rally support. The Pharisaic side of the Sanhedrin would cry foul. A defense attorney would be appointed. The whole thing could be toppled. Calaphas and the Temple authorities knew it had to happen quickly and discreetly. The timing was absolutely critical.

So they brought him to Pilate as soon as the sun was up. Pilate was in Jerusalem for the festival. His usual residence was Caesarea, but to head off the potential risk of rioting and revolt, he and a detachment of troops went up to Jerusalem for the festival. Apparently in an attempt to try to appease the zealots, Pilate established the custom of releasing a prisoner on the festival. All those who had sons or brothers or husbands who had been arrested for political activism (terrorism) would have gathered at Pilate’s Jerusalem residence first thing in the morning to petition for the release of their man. By coincidence, the apparently famous rebel-hero Barabbas³ (ישוע בר אבנא, *Yeshua Bar Abba*) had recently been arrested and sentenced

to crucifixion for his crimes against Rome. The Bar Abba crowd had already gathered that morning to shout for the release of their hero. It would seem that it is possible to be a follower of the wrong Yeshua.

What a strange combination the zealots and Calaphas' colleagues must have made! The zealots were usually dedicated to stabbing men like Calaphas in the back for their collusion with Rome. On that morning, however, they were surprised to hear representatives from the priesthood cheering them on to shout for the release of their hero Bar Abba! The irony was never thicker than when those two sworn enemies were both shouting for the release of Yeshua Bar Abba (Jesus the son of Father) and demanding the crucifixion of Yeshua from Galilee.

The Scourging

8:00-9:00 a.m.

Mark 15:15-20: Somewhere in those early morning hours was the scourging by the Roman soldiers and the mock coronation. After His initial appearance before Pilate, the Master was shuffled off to Herod Antipas' for a short interrogation before being returned to Pilate for His final sentencing. Herod Antipas provided the royal robe for the "King of the Jews."

Among the indignities Yeshua was subjected to at the hands of the Roman soldiers is the feigned coronation. The scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, scepter and the acclamations, "Hail King of the Jews!" are all cruel mockeries of the Messianic coronation. In fact He is the King. He will one day be crowned, robed and handed a scepter to rule over Jerusalem.

Shimon from Cyrene

9:00 a.m.

Mark 15:21: When at last He was led off to be crucified, the Master was so weakened from the scourging that He was unable to carry the heavy crossbeam they laid over His shoulders. In keeping with Roman custom, the convict was to carry his own execution stake. The First Century historian Plutarch wrote, "Every wrongdoer who goes to execution carries out his own cross." After a short distance, He could go no further. The soldiers were not about to carry it themselves, so an early morning Passover pilgrim, Shimon from Cyrene, was conscripted for the job.

Shimon had probably spent a considerable sum to travel to Judea in order to participate in the Passover that year. Participating in a Roman execution was certainly not

a part of his original travel plans. He was probably just entering the city on his way to the Temple for the morning sacrifice and prayers when he was accosted and forced to carry the Master's cross. Most likely, he had no clue about who Yeshua was or why He was sentenced.

Though we don't actually know anything more of the man, we may assume that he became a believer. It would be otherwise unlikely that the believing community would have preserved his name, and even more unlikely that Mark would know the names of his two sons, or that those names would have any relevance to Mark's readership. No doubt Shimon made inquiries about the man whose cross he had carried. "Who is the man, the 'King of the Jews,' they've crucified?" He would have still been in Jerusalem when the rumor spread that the man whose cross he had carried had risen to life.



▶ A panoramic view of a section of the city of Jerusalem, as seen from the southeast, with the Temple Mount and the Old City in the foreground.

Place of the Skull

Mark 15:22–23: Shimon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross for Yeshua from Jerusalem to the hill of Golgotha. The Hebrew *galgolet*, גלגלת (galgalta, גלגלתא in Aramaic with the definite article) means “the skull.” On arriving at Golgotha they offered Him a drink before crucifying Him. Matthew tells us it was wine mixed with gall. Mark says it was myrrh. The Talmud says frankincense was used on such occasions. Whatever it was, it was meant as a sedative and painkiller to numb the victim. We read about the custom in tractate *Sanhedrin*.

Reb Chitya ben Ashi stated in Reb Chisda's name, "When a man is led out to be executed, a chalice of wine containing a small amount of frankincense is given to him in order to anesthetize his nerves, as it is written, 'Give strong drink to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish.'" (b.Sanhedrin 43a, quoting Proverbs 31:6)

After tasting what it was, Yeshua refused it. His rejection of the drink might not have been because it was a painkiller but because He had taken a vow not to drink anything of the fruit of the vine.⁵

They Crucified Him

Mark 15:24: Crucifixion was a Roman mode of execution. The great torment suffered by

the crucified was meant to serve as a deterrent to others. The skeletal remains of a crucified man were discovered in a Jerusalem tomb in 1968.⁷ Based upon the found remains, it seems that the crucifixion nails were driven through the wrists and ankles instead of through the palms and feet as Christian artwork usually depicts. Crosses were an all too common sight outside the walls of Jerusalem. They probably never took the crosses down; they just changed the bodies hanging on them.

The Third Hour

9:00 a.m.

Mark 15:25: The Master was crucified at the third hour, approximately 9:00 a.m. Mark, who is not in the habit of giving his readers the time of day, wants us to know that this happened at the third hour. Why? What is the significance of the third hour?

The Torah mandated two daily worship services in the Temple.⁸ Every day, a single male lamb was offered up as burnt offering for the morning sacrifice. The morning sacrifice was begun at dawn and concluded at the third hour.⁹ The second lamb sacrifice was made at the ninth hour, approximately 3:00 p.m.¹⁰ Morning and afternoon prayers correspond to these times of sacrifice.

At the same time that the Master was being hung by Roman soldiers, the lamb

of the morning sacrifice was being placed upon the altar. As the smoke of the morning sacrifice ascended from the altar, the full complement of priests on duty in the Temple lifted their hands and sang the priestly benediction.¹¹ At the same hour that the Master's hands were lifted and stretched out in the dreadful crucifixion pose, the hands of the priesthood in the Temple were being lifted to pronounce the priestly benediction. He was the morning sacrifice.

Numbered with Transgressors

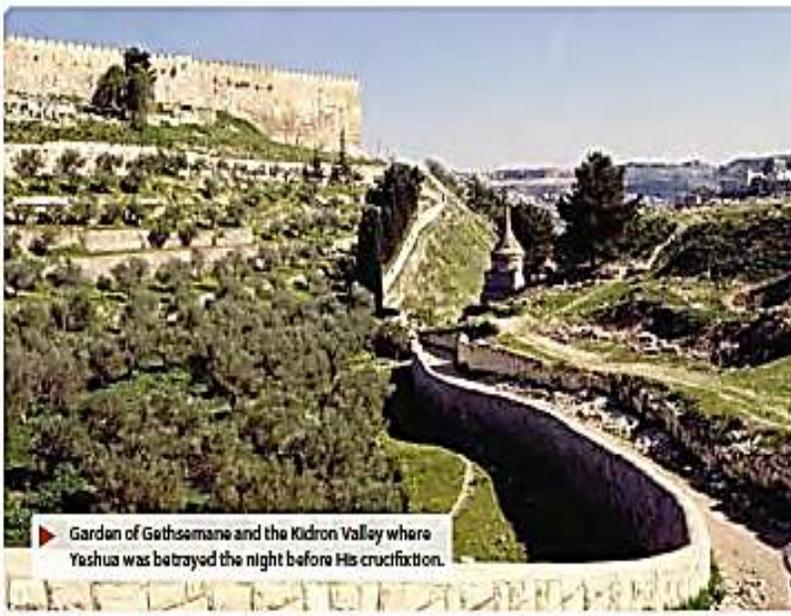
Mark 15:26–28: The placard above His head that declared His crime was called a *titulus*. The Roman authorities attached a *titulus* to serve as a warning to others. Normally it would say “Terrorist” or “Murderer” or “Insurrectionist,” etc. Yeshua's simply declared, “King of the Jews.”

Two zealots were crucified with Him that day, possibly colleagues of Yeshua Bar Abba. One was crucified on His left, the other on His right. Ironically, those are the very stations that the sons of Zebedee, Yaakov and Yochanon (James and John) had rashly hoped to occupy.¹²

The Mocking

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Mark 15:29–32: It was Passover, Jerusalem's busiest day of the year. The hundreds of thousands of pilgrims that had come up for the festival began to file into the city. Flocks of lambs were herded toward the Temple. The roads into Jerusalem became choked with worshippers going up to the Temple to slaughter their Passover lambs. As they approached the gates of the city, a row of execution stakes on a bare hilltop, visible from the road, served to remind everyone that Rome was still in charge. “It may be the Festival of Redemption, but you're not redeemed yet,” the crosses seemed to say to the Jews. It was a small relief to see that there were only three victims that day. Those who had sneered at Yeshua's ministry were quick to cast insults when they saw where the young, would-be Messiah had ended. Mark records the insults and derision of passersby and the mockery of the Temple authorities. Even the two other convicts joined in the chorus of



▶ Garden of Gethsemane and the Kidron Valley where Yeshua was betrayed the night before His crucifixion.

At the same hour that the Master's hands were lifted and stretched out in the dreadful crucifixion pose, the hands of the priesthood in the Temple were being lifted to pronounce the priestly benediction. He was the morning sacrifice.

mocking. But there were other voices as well. There was the weeping of the women of Jerusalem and Galilee. There was the disciple Yochanon, whom He loved, and the innumerable crowds who "had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel."¹² Those who had hailed Him Messiah just a few days before must have felt their stomachs sink and their hands grow limp. They hoped for Messiah-King was dying the death of a common insurrectionist. They hurried on into the city, unable to even look

Darkness 12:00–3:00 p.m.

Mark 15:33: On the 14th day of the Nisan, more worshippers with more sacrifices were squeezed into the Temple on Passover than on any other day.

One time Agrippa the King wished to (count the hosts of) Israel. He said to the High Priest, "Pay attention to the Passover sacrifices." The High Priest took a kidney from each one, and six-hundred-thousand pairs of kidneys were found there, twice as many as those who departed from Egypt, excluding those who were unclean and those who were on a distant journey; and there was not a single Pesach lamb for which less than ten people had registered. They called it, "The Passover of the dense throngs." (m.Pesachim 64a)

Hundreds of thousands of lambs needed to be sacrificed in just a few hours time. In order to accommodate the incredible numbers, the whole priesthood was on duty. Thousands of priests filled the inner Temple courts while the outer courts began to jam with men and their animals.

The Passover lambs were to be offered at the ninth hour.¹⁴ In order to accommodate the dense throngs, the evening (*tamid*) lamb

was sacrificed an hour earlier.

The continual burnt offering was slaughtered at half after the eighth hour (2:30 p.m.) and offered up at half after the ninth hour (3:30 PM). On the eve of Passover it was slaughtered at half after the seventh hour and offered up at half after the eighth hour. (m.Pesachim 5.1)

Yet on this Passover, something was amiss already. Mark tells us that a strange darkness, beginning at noon, had settled on all the land. It might have been heavy clouds, an eclipse, a sudden dust-storm or something akin to the plague of darkness which had come upon Egypt just before the first Passover. There was darkness in the Temple courts. In the court of Israel, the altar fires burned hot and bright as the afternoon sacrifice was consumed. The flames cast swirling shadows all around the courtyard. The sun stayed dark for three hours.

Until the Ninth Hour 3:00 p.m.

Mark 15:33–37: At half past the eighth hour the Priesthood blew a *shofar* in the Temple. A *tektah, shevarim, tektah* blast was the signal to open the gates.¹⁵ A short distance away, just outside the city walls, the sound of the *shofar* blowing reached the ears of those hanging upon the stakes.

The heavy gates of the Temple courts were swung open and the first wave of Israelites with lambs ready for slaughter poured into the courtyard. Row upon row of priests stood at attention in 'fire-lines' ready to receive the virtual flood of

blood. The *Mishnah* describes the scene as follows:

The priests stand in rows with basins of silver and gold in their hands. One row had wholly silver ones, another wholly gold ones; they were not mixed up. And the basins did not have [flat bottoms] lest the priests set them down and the blood congeal. An Israelite slaughtered [his Passover lamb] and a priest received the blood. He hands it to his fellow, and his fellow to his fellow, [each one] receiving a full basin and handing back an empty one. The priest nearest the altar splashes [the blood] in a single act of tossing toward the base. (m.Pesachim 5.5–6)

Within moments, the white plastered and polished, two-story altar of the Temple was running red with the blood of lambs. Channels and gutters cut into the stones of the floor carried away rivers of blood.

At the same moment, just outside the city walls, the last drops of life bled out of the Master's body. The Master cried out, "אלהי אלהי למה שבקתני" —which means, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)



▶ A view of the Kidron Valley from the City of David. A section of the southern wall of the Temple Mount can be seen on the left.

With a loud cry, Yeshua breathed His last. The sun burst through the darkness and the curtain of the Temple was rent.

The Women Stand Vigil

3:00–5:00 p.m.

Mark 15:40–41: A group of women from the Galilee and Jerusalem had followed the execution party from the city that morning. Six hours later, they were still waiting at the cross when He died. Even then they did not leave Him, but they fulfilled the Jewish custom of keeping a *shomer*, שומר (watcher), with a corpse until burial. They stayed at the cross for several more hours.

As they mourned in silent vigil before His body, the sacrifice of the Passover lambs continued in the Temple. The dead lambs were hung on hooks and on wooden poles, their forearms spread in a crucifixion pose as they were skinned and prepared for roasting.¹⁴ While the lambs were being skinned, additional waves of worshippers were slaughtering. All the while the Levites led the people in chanting out the melodies of the Psalms of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–118). The sound of their voices provided the background music for the death of the Messiah. The glad sounds which came reverberating from inside the city must have seemed strange and out of place to the small group standing vigil with His body. Yeshua and the twelve had sung those same Psalms just the night before.¹⁷ How differently they sounded today!

As the Psalms of the *Hallel* continued and the women stood vigil, soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified so that they would finish dying before the Sabbath. They were surprised to find Yeshua already dead.

Taking Down the Body

5:00–6:00 p.m.

Mark 15:46: Meanwhile Yosef of Arimathea, a Pharisee who is described as a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, a man awaiting the Kingdom of Heaven and a secret disciple of Yeshua, went to Pilate to negotiate for the body of Yeshua. Time was critically short. Only a few hours remained until sunset and the beginning of the Sabbath. Once the removal of the body was guaranteed, he

enlisted the help of his fellow sanhedrist (another believer), the fabulously wealthy Nakdimon ben Gorton (Nicodemus) to assist him with the burial.¹⁸

They wrapped His body and carried Him to a nearby, rock-cut tomb owned by Yosef of Arimathea. It may be that Yosef had purchased it just hours before as part of the arrangements he made for the burial that day. By caring for the body of the Master, both men rendered themselves levitically unclean. As a result, both were disqualified from eating the Passover that evening. Both Yosef and Nakdimon were men of prestige and influence. They both could have sent servants to take care of the burial of Yeshua so as not to forfeit their Passover *seders* that evening. These two obscure disciples of the Master show their love and devotion by attending to His body personally.¹⁹

Closing the Tomb

6:00–7:00 p.m.

Mark 15:46–47: The sun had already touched the western horizon and begun to slip below the hills of Jerusalem as Yosef and Nakdimon rolled the stone shut. The air over the city was filled with the smoke from hundreds of outdoor ovens in which the thousands of Passover lambs were being roasted. Luke tells us that the Sabbath was already drawing on as the tomb was sealed. Miriam from Magdala and Miriam the wife of Chalphi were present. As they turned to leave, the 15th day of Nisan and the Festival of Unleavened Bread was beginning. A full moon was rising over the Mount of Olives. It was *seder* night.

Seder Night

Why is this night different than all other nights? All over Jerusalem that night, cups were being lifted while the ancient story of the redemption from Egypt was told and retold.

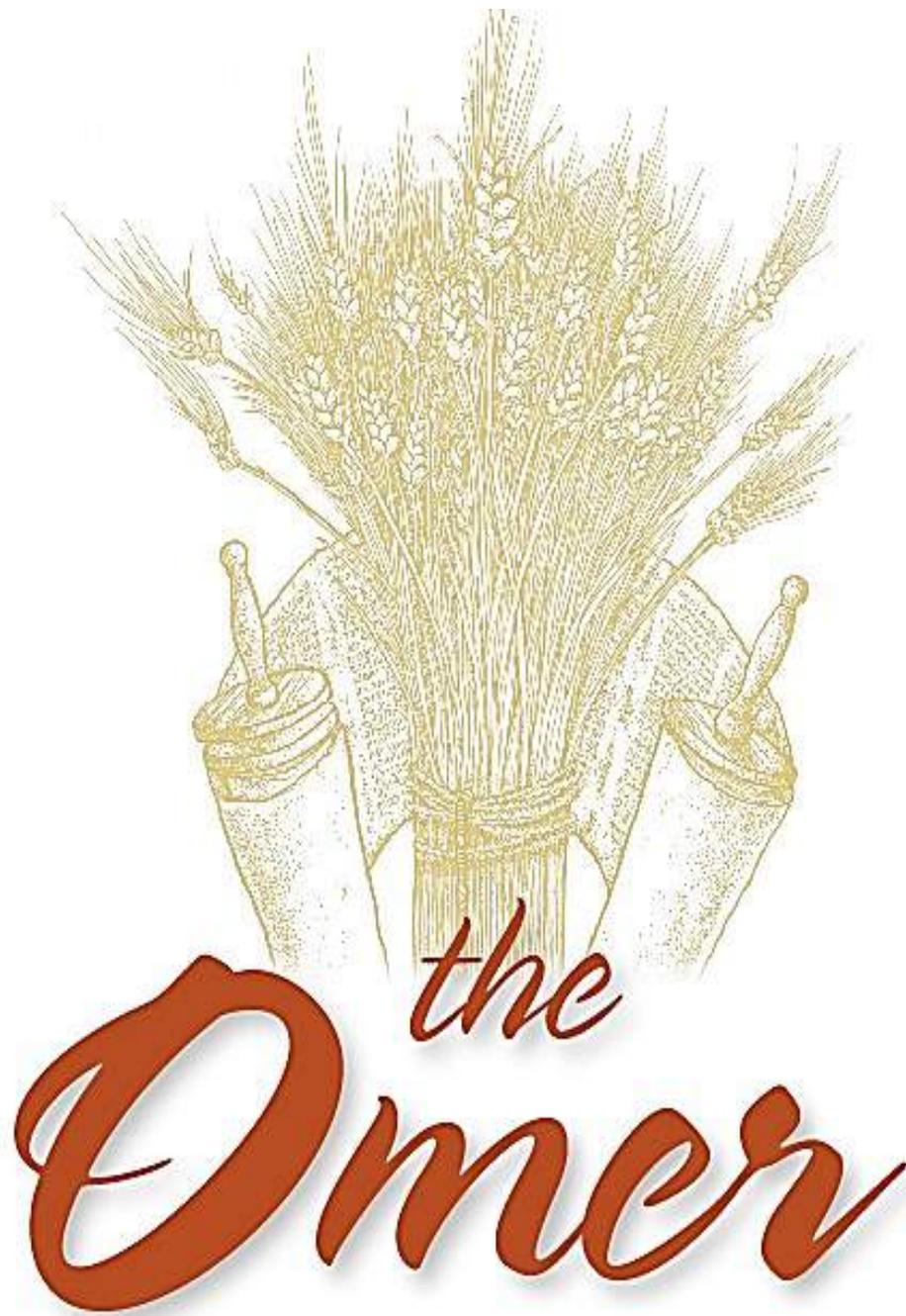
In haste we went out of Egypt... This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt... On all other nights we dip once, tonight we dip twice... The more one tells of it the more the praiseworthy... Bitter herbs, what is the reason for them? The Egyptians made our lives bitter.... This year we are slaves, next year may we be free men.

This night is different. It is the anniversary

of the night when the blood of the lamb was smeared over the doorways of the houses of Israel. It is the anniversary of one long day. 

Endnotes

- 1 It is well established that the court which condemned Yeshua was not the Sanhedrin, but an ad-hoc assemblage of Yeshua's enemies among the Sadducean side of the court. See Alfred Edersheim's *Jesus the Messiah*. Hendrickson Publishers. Pg. 556. See also, *Torah Club Volume Four* comments on Matthew 26:57-72 and Mark 14:53-62.
- 2 *Torah Club Volume Four* offers several theories of chronology which attempt to ascertain which day all of this happened. See the comments on Mark 15 for the argumentation to support the Thursday/Nisan 14 theory.
- 3 We know his first name from a textual variant in the manuscripts of Matthew.
- 4 Luke 23:6–12
- 5 Evans, Craig A. 2001. *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 8:27–16:20*. Dallas, Texas. Word Books Publisher, p. 497
- 6 Matthew 26:29, according to the *Mishnah* in Nazir 1, His vow would have been binding as a Nazarite vow. (See Numbers 6:1–21 for the details of the Nazarite vow.)
- 7 See Tzaferis' article *Crucifixion, The Archaeological Evidence*. Biblical Archaeological Review Vol. XLNo.1
- 8 Exodus 29:38–42, Leviticus 6:9–13, Numbers 28:3–8.
- 9 Edersheim, Alfred. 1992. *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 143. "According to general agreement the morning sacrifice was brought at the 'third hour,' thus corresponding to our nine o'clock"
- 10 Josephus, who served as a priest himself, fixes the afternoon sacrifice at "about the ninth hour." (*Antiquities* 14.4.3). See also M. Pesachim 5:1.
- 11 Numbers 6:24–26. See *Torah Club Volume Four's* comments on Luke 24:51.
- 12 Matthew 20:20–27
- 13 Luke 24:21
- 14 Literally "between the evenings." Exodus 12:6.
- 15 *m.Pesachim* 5.5
- 16 *m.Pesachim* 5.9
- 17 See *Torah Club Volume Four's* comments on Mark 14:26.
- 18 John 19:39. See *Torah Club Volume Four's* comments on John 3:1 for more on Nicodemus.
- 19 In Numbers 9:10–11, the Torah provides for those who find themselves in just such a situation. One month later, somewhere in Jerusalem, on the 15th day of the Second Month, Yosef of Arimathea and Nakdimon ben Gorton probably sat down to make their *seder*.



the **Omer**

"When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest an omer of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath."

(Leviticus 23:10-11)

The command to bring the first sheaf of the harvest to the Temple is of great significance to the disciples of Yeshua. It is an obscure appointment on the Biblical calendar, sometimes called the First Fruits of the barley harvest, but better known simply by its Biblical name, "The Omer." The Omer is a minor festival with major Messianic implications.

On the same day that that Calaphas and his associates tried the Master, apostles of the Sanhedrin went out to a barley field not far from Jerusalem. On the same day that the Romans bound and crucified the Master, the apostles of the Sanhedrin bound up the standing barley into bundles while it was still attached to the ground so that it would be easier to reap.¹

A day later, after the sun had set and the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread was over, just 24 hours before the Master rose from His tomb, they returned to the barley field, reaped it and collected it in three baskets, even though it was yet the weekly Sabbath. That night they carried the baskets of grain to Jerusalem. They delivered the baskets to the priesthood in the Temple. The baskets contained more than enough grain to constitute a full sheaf's worth: enough to fulfill the mandate of Leviticus 23:10. The Hebrew word for sheaf is *omer*.

The harvest ritual of gathering this barley

omer was for a special first fruits offering to the Lord. The Torah prohibited using or eating any grain or produce from the new year's crops until the first *omer* of grain to ripen was harvested and brought to the Temple. The barley crop ripens first in Israel, so the *omer* was always a barley sheaf. The commandment of the barley *omer* served to remind Israel that the land and its produce belong first to God. The people of Israel could not enjoy the produce of the land until God had received His due. Until they harvested and offered the barley *omer* in the Temple, the rest of the crops were not deemed kosher.

So it was that very night, the Master's second night in the tomb, that the priests in the Temple threshed, roasted and ground the barley *omer* into flour. All night they prepared it. Then while the Master passed those silent Sabbath hours, the priests refined the freshly milled flour by sifting it through 13 sieves.

Linking up the *omer* ritual with the resurrection depends on how we reckon the passion week. For those who accept the traditional Christian Good Friday, whereby the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread coincides with the weekly Shabbat, the waving of the *omer* would have taken place on Sunday after the resurrection. Those who adhere to the Good Thursday model advanced by some Hebrew Roots teachers and based on the Gospel of John, the Temple rituals of wav-



After the sun had set and the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread was over, they returned to the barley field, reaped it and collected it in three baskets... That night they carried the baskets of grain to Jerusalem. They delivered the baskets to the priesthood in the Temple.

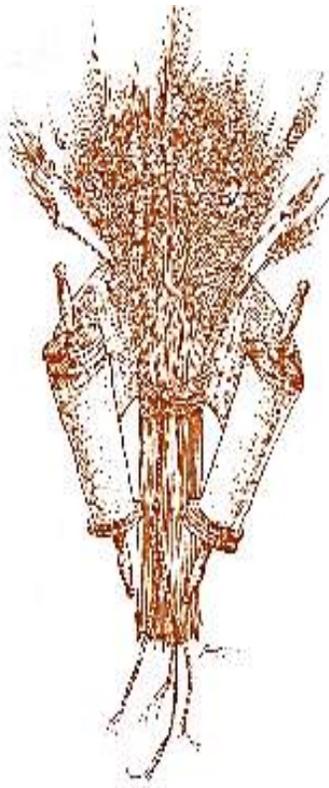
ing the sheaf and presenting the first fruits would have taken place just hours before the resurrection. Either way, the synonymy of events is remarkable. For our purposes, we will assume the latter model where the Master was crucified on a Thursday, Friday was the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, and Saturday—the weekly Sabbath—was the day of presenting the first fruits of the barley.

That Sabbath day, while the Master slept, the priesthood was busy mixing the barley flour with oil and frankincense to make it into a bread offering. Just hours before the Sabbath was over, while Miriam from Magdala and the other women among the disciples still "rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56), the High Priest touched the barley flour to the altar and offered a portion of it on the altar as a memorial portion. They baked the remainder of the dough into loaves of unleavened barley bread to be



▶ A Shavuot Ceremony in Kibbutz Ein Shemar, Israel

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The Counting of the Omer creates a countdown to *Shavuot*, the time of giving of the Torah and the time of the giving of the Holy Spirit. As such, it guides us on a spiritual journey of preparation, begun with Passover, and completed at *Shavuot*.



shared among the priesthood. Along with this barley bread offering of the *omer*, they sacrificed a single lamb as a burnt offering.

By divine design, the rituals of offering the barley *omer* in the Temple coincided with the death and resurrection of the Yeshua.

Counting the Omer, A Subject of Dispute

The Harvest of the barley *Omer* occurs on the second day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread. It is a miniature festival within a festival. It is listed in Leviticus 23 along with all the appointed times of God.

Beginning on the day that the first *omer* of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple, a countdown to the next Biblical Festival began. The Torah commands the Israelites to count off 49 days and then celebrate the festival of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) on the 50th day. The day the *Omer* was brought was 'day one' of what is called 'Counting the Omer.' The next day was 'day two' of the *Omer* count, the next was 'day three' and so on.

During the 49 days of the *Omer* count, the wheat crop in Israel ripens. By the end of the *Omer* count, the crop is ready for harvest and the First Fruits of the wheat crop can be brought to the Temple for Pentecost. However, in the apostolic era, the Pharisees and the Sadducees disagreed about the timing of this ritual. As a result, they disagreed about the date of Pentecost.

The point of contention lies in the ambiguity of the Hebrew text. Leviticus 23:11 says the *omer* is to be brought "on the day after the Sabbath." It is not clear whether the verse is referring to the weekly Sabbath or the special High Sabbath which begins the week of Unleavened Bread. If the verse refers to the weekly Sabbath, then the *Omer* would always fall on a Sunday but would have no fixed calendar date. If, however, the verse refers to the special Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, then the First Fruits of the barley would always fall on the six-

teenth day of the first month (*Nisan*) but would not fall on a fixed week day.

In ancient times, the meaning of the verse was hotly debated between the Pharisees and a sect of the Sadducees. The Sadducees understood the "day after the Sabbath" as being Sunday. The Pharisees argued against that seemingly literal reading. In first-century Temple practice, the Pharisees ultimately prevailed, and as a result modern Judaism still reckons the Sabbath in question as the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Thus in modern Jewish observance, the First Fruits of the barley *omer* always falls on the sixteenth day of the first month (the second day of Unleavened Bread).

For years, I personally preferred and taught the Sadducean method of reckoning. I even wrote an article on the subject for First Fruits of Zion, urging believers to adopt the Sadducean reckoning. My colleague Tim Hegg, however, argued for accepting the traditional, Pharisaic reckoning. On one occasion, Tim challenged me, asking me, "When the believers gathered in the Temple to celebrate the 50th day of the *Omer*, did they do it according to the reckoning of the Sadducees



or the Pharisees?" I looked into the matter.

If we can ascertain how the *omer* was reckoned in the days of the believers, we will know how we should reckon it. Two important, first-century eye-witnesses and contemporaries of the Apostles bring important testimony. Flavius Josephus, who was himself a member of the Temple priesthood, reports in *Antiquities* 3.10.5-6, "On the second day of Unleavened Bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month [Nisan], they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them . . . They also at this participation of the first-fruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb as a burnt offering to God."

Similarly, Philo, another first-century, Jewish eyewitness reports, "There is also a festival on the day of the Passover Feast, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf [*omer*], from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit..." (Philo, *Special Laws* 2:29-150) Both Philo and Josephus agree that the ritual was practiced in accordance with the reckoning of the Pharisees. In addition, the Greek Septuagint version of the Torah (a version employed fairly extensively by the first-century believers) makes the matter explicit by translating Leviticus 23:11 as, "And he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the morrow of the first day the priest shall lift it up." The term "morrow of the first day" can only be understood in accordance with the traditional Pharisaic reckoning. Tim was right. I was wrong. If the believers had counted the *omer* according to the Sadducees, they would not have been gathered in the Temple with all Israel—pilgrims from all over the world—on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. God put His divine seal of approval on the traditional method of counting by pouring out His Holy Spirit on the day of the Pharisaic *Shavuot*. After studying the matter out, I had to change the way I reckoned the *omer*, and I had to re-write this article.

No Small Consequence

The counting of the days of the *omer* is a biblical commandment incumbent upon every believer. Traditionally, the period of the *omer* count is to be a time of spiritual introspec-

tion as the counters prepare themselves for *Shavuot*. Because it begins during Passover and concludes at *Shavuot*, the counting of the *omer* remembers the journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai.

The Messianic implications of the *omer* and the subsequent count down are great. According to Matthew 28:1, Yeshua rose "after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," a Hebrew expression for the *havdalah* hour that ends the Sabbath on Saturday night. We cannot help but notice that the appointed day for harvesting the barley *omer* coincides with the resurrection of Messiah. In a remarkable display of God's sovereign planning, the Torah set aside the resurrection as a day of first fruits 1,400 years before its occurrence.

The symbolism is strong. Just as the first *omer* of barley was brought as a first fruits of the whole harvest, so too Messiah's resurrection was a first fruits of the resurrection of the dead. This is the imagery Paul invokes with the words, "Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."² Just as the first fruits of the barley made all the rest of the harvest kosher for harvest, so too the resurrection of Messiah makes the resurrection of the dead possible.

Counting the Days of Messiah

Because of the resurrection and the connection to Pentecost, the counting of the *omer* is an important *mitzvah* for believers.

According to Jewish tradition, the counting is done in the following prescribed manner. After the evening prayers each day, the counter recites a blessing: "Blessed are You, LORD Our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to count the *omer*." Then the counter simply states, "Today is X days of the *omer*." The person counting follows his formal declaration of the *omer* day with a recitation of Psalm 67 and a few short petitions for spiritual cleansing and renewal.

Tradition prescribes the recitation of Psalm 67 because it is composed of exactly 49 Hebrew words which correspond to the 49 days of the *omer* count. The Psalm is sea-

sonally appropriate because of its harvest motif. It is spiritually appropriate because it speaks clearly of God's salvation (*Yeshua*) being made known over all the earth.

The Counting of the *omer* creates a count down to *Shavuot*, the time of giving of the Torah and the time of the giving of the Holy Spirit. As such, it guides us on a spiritual journey of preparation. It is a journey that is begun with Passover, the symbol of our salvation in Yeshua, and completed at Pentecost, the symbol of our completion through the Spirit. The distance of days between the two events should be a time of spiritual reflection, growth, purification and preparation.

The Master's resurrection makes the counting of the *omer* a season of special significance and joy. For His disciples, it is a time to remember the resurrected Yeshua. All of His post-resurrection appearances fell within the days of the *omer* count.

At the end of the first day of the *omer*, at the beginning of the second day, He rose. On the second day of the *omer*, He appeared to Miriam and to two of our number while they traveled to Emmaus, and also to Peter. On the third day of the *omer* He appeared in our midst, among the Twelve. On the tenth day of the *omer* He appeared to us again, and Thomas was with us. During the counting He appeared to 500 of our number and then to James. During the counting He appeared to seven of our number while they fished on the sea. On the 41st day of the *omer* He led us out to a hill near Bethany, and we saw Him ascend to heaven. Before He ascended, He commanded us not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father.

We waited and counted the days. Forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four, forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine days of the *omer*...and when the day of Pentecost was fully come we were all together in one place.³

Let's work together this year as we keep the *mitzvah* of Counting the *omer*. Let's express the resurrected life within us by doing more *mitzvot* and spreading more joy. 

Endnotes

- 1 *Menachot* 10:3. See *Mishnah, Menachot* 10 for detailed information on the *omer* ritual.
- 2 1 Corinthians 15:20
- 3 Acts 2

A Messianic Haggadah



Dedicated to HaShem, the One True G_D.

There is none like You - Who was, Who is and Who is to come.

You Shall Reign Forever and Ever!

Bedikat Hametz ~ The Search for Leaven

Leader: In the days just before Pesach (Passover) begins it is tradition to thoroughly clean ones home. Thus you can thank us Jews for starting the tradition of spring cleaning. Before we can celebrate the Pesach Seder we must first remove all hametz (leavened) from our homes as commanded in Exodus 12:18-20. "From the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day, you are to eat matzah (unleavened bread). During those seven days, no leaven is to be found in your houses. Whoever eats food with hametz in it is to be cut off from the community of Israel ~ it doesn't matter whether he is a foreigner or a citizen of the land. Eat nothing with hametz (leaven) in it. Wherever you live, eat matzah."

The head of the house makes the final preparations for Pesach by making a search for hametz , but first recites the benediction, "Blessed are You L-rd, our G-d, Ruler of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to remove the hametz (leaven)." It is customary to turn off the lights and only use an oil lamp or a candle to conduct the search. Since pre-Passover "spring-cleaning" will have disposed of most hametz (leaven), small pieces of bread and crumbs are left around the house in advance (usually on paper) for the searcher to find, so that his benediction should not have been recited in vain. All leavened items discovered is carefully placed in a paper bag with the aid of a white feather and a wooden spoon, tied up and put aside for burning the next day. After the search has been completed we pray the following prayer to make certain our homes are cleansed of all hametz (leaven):

ALL: All leaven that may still be in my possession, whether I have observed it or not observed it, whether I have searched it out or not searched it out, shall be as if it does not exist, and as the dust of the earth. Amen.

Leader: The search for hametz (leaven) also represents Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah. Even in Jewish tradition (not listed in the bible) Yeshua can clearly be seen in these symbolic ceremonies.

1. The candle represents the Word of G-d who is the Light of the world, whose written word reveals our sin to us.
2. The feather represents the Ruach HaKodesh (The Holy Spirit) guiding us to Messiah.
3. The wooden spoon represents the execution stake.
4. The paper bag represents the grave.
5. The fire represents how sin has been dealt with, taken away as far as the east is from the west, to be remembered no more.

So, why would eating anything with hametz be so severely punished as to be cut off from the community of Israel (Ex.12:19)? By the way the term cut off means to destroy, consume, lose, perish. Yeshua (Jesus) himself warns his talmidim (disciples) to "Watch out! Guard yourselves against the hametz (leaven) of the P'rushim (Pharisees) and Tz'dukim (Sadducees)," (Matthew 16:6). In the Scriptures, hametz (leaven) is used to represent sin. In ancient times before baking a batch of leavened dough part of the dough was pinched off and was later used to leaven a new batch of flour by mixing the two together. This is symbolic of generational sin which started with Adam and Havah (Eve) who disobeyed G-d's command, "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die." (Gen. 2:16-17). Thus their sin is passed on to all subsequent generations with its punishment of death, "...you will return to the ground - for you were taken out of it: you are dust, and you will return to dust." (Gen. 3:19). Who can reverse the curse, Who and how can our relationship with G-d be restored?



...G-D, sent him out of the garden of Eden...Gen. 3:23.

According to the teaching of the apostolic writings (New Testament), the mo'adim (appointed times) of Pesach (Passover) and Unleavened Bread picture certain aspects of the sacrificial work of Yeshua (Jesus). In 1 Cor. 5:6-7 we read: "It takes only a little hametz (leaven) to leaven a whole batch of dough?" Get rid of the old hametz (leaven), so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened. For our Pesach (Passover) lamb, the Messiah has been sacrificed. The writer was clearly explaining that we are to understand the Pesach (Passover) in terms of what it can teach us about the person and/or work of Messiah. However, we must remember that such a Messianic understanding does not in any way negate the historical interpretation of the mo'adim (appointed times).

Who should celebrate Pesach (Passover)?

Leader: Many people think that the Feast Days of the bible are the "Jewish Holy Days". Would you be surprised to find out that if you believe in the G-d of Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov (Abraham, Issac, and Jacob), the G-d of Israel, than these Feast Days are for you? They are Adonai's (L-rd's) mo'adim (appointed times), and on these mo'adim (appointed times) G-d chooses to meet with us in a very special way. This is a part of every believer's heritage - don't allow the enemy to rob you of it! Ephesians 2:11-19 says:

Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth – called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised – at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Israel. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying G-d's promise. You were in this world without hope and without G-d. But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood. ...He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom, in order to reconcile to G-d both in a single body by being executed on a stake as a criminal and thus in himself that enmity. ... So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers. On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with G-d's people and members of G-d's family.

And in Ephesians 3:6 we read: ...that in union with the messiah and through the Good News the Gentiles were to be joint heirs, a joint body and joint sharers with the Jews in what G-d has promised. A foreigner joining Adonai (L-rd) should not say, "Adonai will separate me from his people"; Isaiah 56:3.

I hope that you are starting to see that those of you who are not Jewish, that these mo'adim are for you as well as the Jewish people – you ARE a part of Israel.

Now in regards to celebrating Adonai's Pesach (Passover), the L-rd says, The Whole community of Israel is to keep it. If a foreigner staying with you wants to observe Adonai's Pesach (Passover), all his males must be circumcised. Then he may take part and observe it; he will be like a citizen of the land. But no uncircumcised person is to eat it. The same teaching is to apply equally to the citizen and to the foreigner living among you. Exodus 12:47-49.

“This will be a day for you to remember and celebrate as a festival to Adonai (L-rd); from generation to generation you are to celebrate it by a perpetual regulation. Exodus 12:14.

Leader: We will now move on in our Seder (order) with the lighting of the candles.

Light is a symbol of G-d's presence, and lighting the candles is a reminder that Adonai (L-rd) is our light and He is here with us. It is tradition to light candles during G-d's mo'adim (appointed times), and it is also fitting for the woman to be the one to light the candles, as it was a woman, Havah (Eve) who originally sinned causing the light of G-d to be diminished. It reminds us of G-d's promise that Mashiach (Messiah), the Light of the World, would come through the seed of a woman.

Woman of the House: Ba-rooch ata Adonai, Elo-hay-noo meh-lech ha-o-lam, ah-sheer keed-sha-noo beed-va-reh-cha v'na-tahn la-noo et Yeshua m'she-chay-noo, v'tzee-va-noo l'he-oat oar la-oh-lahm. Ah-main.

Blessed are You O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by Your commandments, given us Yeshua our Messiah, and commanded us to be a light to the world. Amen.

Ba-rooch ata Adonai Elo-hay-noo meh-lech ha-o-lam, she-hek-hey-yanu, v'key-a-manu, ve-higee-yanu laz'man ha-zeh. Ah-main.

Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d, Ruler of the universe, who granted us life and sustenance, and has permitted us to reach this season. Amen.

The Four Cups of Wine

During our Pesach (Passover) Seder we drink four cups of wine. It is done in remembrance of the four major promises G-d made to Israel in regards to their redemption and deliverance.

ALL: "I will BRING you out from Egypt"..... (Cup of Sanctification)

"I will DELIVER you from slavery"..... (Cup of Recitation of the Plagues)

"I will REDEEM you with an outstretched arm" (Cup of Redemption)

"I will TAKE you to Me for a people"..... (Cup of Praise & Intimacy)

The First Cup ~ Sanctification (Kiddush)

Leader: As we drink from these four cups today let us remember G-d's promises of redemption and the relationship He desires to have with each one of us. Now, let us lift up our first cup, and bless the name of Adonai (The L-rd) together.

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo
Meh-lech ha-o-lahm bo-ray pree ha-ga-fen.



Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Leader: When our ancestors celebrated the first Pesach (Passover) they were still in slavery and ate in much haste according to Adonai's command while they waited their soon departure from Egyptian bondage. But now we are free, so we can recline as we enjoy our seder.

Let us now drink our first cup of wine, the Cup of Sanctification, while leaning to the left.

(Leaning to the left is a tradition that will be explained later in the seder.)

(Refill Cups)

Urkhatz ~ The Washing of Hands



Leader: The washing of hands is a tradition from when the Temple was still standing. Some say it came from when G-d commanded Aaron the first High priest of Israel to wash himself before entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). At our Seder, with this in mind, we will wash our hands prior to eating the vegetable dipped in salt water.

(A cup of water is taken in the left hand, and half of it is poured twice over the right hand. Then the other half is poured over the left hand).

Leader: As we recall the story of Pesach (Passover) we are not only reminded of our beginnings, but it also reminds us that our purpose here on earth is to declare the wondrous works of Adonai, that all the earth may know Him. The story of Pesach (Passover) is the story of the rebirth of our people, a rebirth to which the Scriptures constantly urge us to

return. And nowhere – and in no one- do we find that return more clearly than in our Messiah Yeshua. He *is* our Pesach – our deliverer, our salvation.

To help tell this story, in the middle of your tables is a Seder plate. On it are several items with symbolic meaning, which will help us to see the way to redemption. Please note however, that some of these elements are from tradition and not found in the Scriptures. Those that we do find in the Text are the matzah, maror, and the fruit of the vine, and the lamb, represented by the shank bone.

Karpas – The Greens & Salt Water



Leader: Karpas is usually parsley or lettuce. Pesach (Passover) is celebrated in the springtime and the earth is blossoming with green representing new life. It also represents the hyssop branch that was used to dip in the blood from the lamb and applied to the doorposts and lintels of the homes of the Israelites during the first Pesach (Passover).

Traditionally, there is a bowl of salt water next to the Karpas which represents the tears shed by our people while in slavery in Egypt.

Let us all now recite the blessing:

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo meh-lech ha-o-lahm
bo-ray pree ha-ada-ma.

Blessed are You, Oh L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Leader: Now let us dip the Karpas twice in the salt water and eat it together.

Beytzah ~ The Roasted Egg



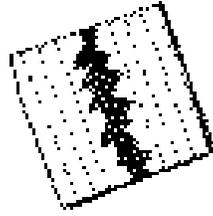
Leader: Beytzah is a roasted egg. It's symbolic of the festival sacrifice called the hagigah. It also reminds us of our grief due to the destruction of the second Temple in 70CE. It's shape symbolizes eternal life, having no beginning and no end.

Let us now bless the Name of the L-rd together, and partake in eating the egg together.

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo meh-lech ha-o-lahm, shee-ha-kol
ni-hee-yeh- bi-dva-ro.

ALL: Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, through Whose Word all things were called into being.

Yakhatz – Breaking the Middle Matzah



Leader: The matzahs are kept in a special linen bag with three compartments called the matzah tosh. There are three matzahs bound together inside. Although there are numerous explanations regarding this, the rabbis refer to these three as a “unity.” We now take the middle piece of matzah out and break it in half. One piece is placed on the Seder plate, the other one, which is called the Afikomen, is wrapped in a linen cloth and hidden until after the meal when the children will find it. The one who finds it will receive a reward because the Seder can not continue with out it.

Ha Lachma Anya ~ The Bread of Affliction



Leader: This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt

(Dt. 16:3) All who are hungry let them come and eat. All who are needy let them come and celebrate the Pesach (Passover) with us. Now we celebrate this holy day here and hope next year we will celebrate it in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem).

Ma Nishtanah – The Four Questions

Leader: It is time for the children to learn of Pesach (Passover) by asking the four traditional questions, and it is our privilege, duty and responsibility to answer these questions.

Child: Ma nishtanah halailah hazeh mikol haleylot?
Shebekhol haleylot anu okhlin khameytz
umatzah. Halailah hazeh kulo matzah?
Shebekhol haleylot anu okhlin she'ar
yerakot. Halailah hazeh kulo maror?
Shebekhol haleylot eyn anu matbilin
afilu pa'am ekhat.
Halailah hazeh shtey famim?
Shebekhol haleylot anu okhlin,
Beyn yoshevin, uveyn mesubin,
Halailah hazeh kulanu mesubin?

Child: Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we eat leavened bread. Why on this night do we eat only matzah?

Leader: They baked matzah loaves from the dough they had brought out of Egypt, since it was unleavened; because they had been driven out of Egypt without time to prepare supplies for themselves. Exodus 12:39.

Child: On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs. Why on this night only bitter herbs?

Leader: Eating the bitter herbs reminds us of how bitter the bondage was to our ancestors. (Exodus 1:14).

Child: On all other nights we do not dip our herbs. Why on this night do we dip twice?

Leader: The first time we dip we remember the parting of the sea (Exodus 14:16). The second time we dip we remember G-d closing up the sea behind us. (Exodus 14:27).

Child: On all other nights we eat sitting upright or reclining. Why on this night do we recline?
Leader: Reclining reminds us we are no longer slaves, but we are free. Slaves eat standing but when you are free you can eat reclining on a pillow.

Maggid – The Telling

Leader: Let us now tell of the story of how our ancestors came to Egypt and how G-d delivered them with a mighty outstretched arm.

Leader: A great famine soon came upon all the land of Egypt and K'na'an – great tribulation- and our fathers could not find sustenance. Then Ya'akov (Jacob) having heard that there was grain in Egypt, sent forth our fathers... and Yosef (Joseph) made himself known to them... Then Yosef (Joseph) sent and called for his father Ya'akov (Jacob), and all his family, and they all came to live in Egypt in the land of Goshen. Thus, G-d sent Yosef (Joseph) ahead of Israel to preserve a remnant in the land for them, and to give life to them by a great escape. Gen. 45:7.

Reader 1 : Yosef (Joseph) died, as did all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful, and they teemed and multiplied and were very, very mighty – the land was filled with them. Exodus 1:6-7.

Reader 2 : Now there arose new king over Egypt. He knew nothing about Yosef (Joseph) but said to his people, “Look, the descendants of Israel have become a people too numerous and powerful for us. Come, let’s use wisdom in dealing with them. Otherwise, they’ll continue to multiply; and in the event of war they might ally themselves with our enemies, fight against us and leave the altogether.” Exodus 1:8-10.

Reader 3 : So they put slavemasters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pharaoh the storage cities of Pitom and Ra’amses. But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more they multiplied and expanded, until the Egyptians came to dread the people of Israel and worked them relentlessly, making their lives bitter with hard labor – digging clay, making bricks, all kinds of field work; and in all this toil they were shown no mercy.

Exodus 1:11-14.

Reader 4 : Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every boy (*Hebrew*) that is born, throw in the river; but let the girls live.” Exodus 1:22.

Leader: And it came to pass that one of the Hebrew slaves ...conceived and had a son, upon seeing what a fine child he was, she hid him for three months. Exodus 2:2. She placed him in a basket by the riverbank where upon Pharaoh’s daughter found him and raised him as her own. She called him Moshe (pulled out)... Exodus 2:10.

Reader 1 : During the long period that followed the people of Israel still groaned under slavery, and they cried out, and their cry went up to G-d and He heard them.

Reader 2: One day, Moshe came to the mountain of G-d... and there appeared to him a messenger of Adonai (the L-rd) in a burning bush. He called Moshe to be the one who would deliver His people from slavery.

So Moshe along with his brother Aharon went before Pharaoh proclaiming what Adonai (the L-rd) had said “Let My people go!” But Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen to the words of Adonai (the L-rd).

Reader 3: G-d sent many plagues upon the Egyptians, and Pharaoh would say he'd let G-d's people go, but then after the plagues had gone Pharaoh would once again harden his heart and not let G-d's people go.

Reader 4: Then G-d sent the last and final plague, the death of the first born, whether man or animal. But in order for Israel to be spared G-d gave them specific instructions:

Leader: Speak to all the assembly of Israel and say, "On the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb or kid for his family, one per household -...Your animal must be without defect, a male in its first year,..." You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, and then the entire assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter it at dusk. Yeshua came into Yerushalayim riding on a colt on the tenth of Nisan, lamb selection day, he was examined for blemish and was found to be without any. On the fourteenth day of Nisan Yeshua, our Pesach lamb, died on the execution stake at 3:00 pm. (Mark 15:33-37). They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the two sides and top of the door-frame at the entrance of the house in which they eat it. ...Don't eat it raw or boiled, but roasted in the fire, with its head, lower parts of its legs and its inner organs. Let nothing of it remain till morning; the Judeans did not want the bodies to remain on the stakes on a Shabbat so they were taken down - John 19:31 ... and you are not to break any of its bones...when they got to Yeshua and saw he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but did pierce his side, out of which flowed blood and water. For that night, I will pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both men and animals;... The blood will serve as a sign marking the houses where you are; when I see the blood, I will pass over (Hebrew Pasach) you - when I strike the land of Egypt, the death blow will not strike you. Exodus 12:3-46.

Reader 1 : Only after the death of Pharaoh's firstborn son did he finally let Israel go. They were not far gone when once again Pharaoh had a change of heart and pursued Israel with his armies to bring them back. Israel was locked in by the Red Sea with no way to escape. Then G-d ordered Moshe to raise his staff and parted the Sea.

Reader 2 : The Israelites passed through the Red Sea (symbolic of the mikvah – baptism), and arrived safely on the other side as free people and G-d closed up the Red Sea behind them destroying Pharaoh and his armies.

Leader : Pharaoh chose to disobey G-d, and he and his people were destroyed as a result of it. All peoples are G-d's creation and it grieves His heart to see them go astray. So even though we celebrate our now being free, our joy is not complete as long as others remain in bondage to sin and eternal death. So, let us therefore diminish our cups of joy by dipping a finger into the wine and sprinkling a drop on our plates, one drop for each plague.

Plagues

Dip and Sprinkle One Time While Recalling:

<u>ALL</u> :	Dom –	Blood
	Tze-far-da-yah –	Frogs
	Ki-neem –	Lice
	O-rov –	Insects
	De-ver –	Livestock Plague
	She-hin –	Boils
	Bo-rod –	Hail
	Ar-beh –	Locust
	Ho-shekh –	Darkness
	Ma-khat be-ho-rot –	Death of the First Born!

Leader: Let us now sing Dayenu. Which means "It Would Have Been Enough."

ALL: Dayenu

Ilu hotsi, hotsi onu, Hotsi onu mi Mitzrayim (2x)... Dayenu!

Had G-d done no more than save us from Egypt

...we would have been grateful!

Ilu natan, natan la-nu, Natan lanu et ha Shabbat (2x)...Dayenu!

Had G-d done no more than give us Shabbat rest

...we would have been grateful!

Ilu natan, natan lanu, Natan lanu et ha Torah (2x)...Dayenu!

Had G-d done no more than give us Torah

...we would have been grateful!

Ilu natan, natan lanu, Natan lanu et Yeshua (2x)...Dayenu!

G-d has given us Yeshua, and for this and all these things, we are grateful!

Leader: Let us now lift our cups and bless the L-rd.

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo

Meh-lech ha-o-lahm bo-ray pree ha-ga-fen.



Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d,

King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Leader: Let us now drink the second cup, “The Cup of Plagues.”

Leader : Rabbi Gamliel used to say, “whoever does not explain these three symbols, the shank bone, the matzah, and the bitter herbs, at a seder on Pesach (Passover) has not fulfilled his duty.” - this is the same Rabbi Gamliel who was the grandson of Rabbi Hillel, and who served as the primary mentor and teacher to Shaul (Paul).

Shank Bone



Leader : Zroah is a shank bone of a lamb. The lamb is a very important element of the Pesach (Passover) celebration. Its sacrifice provided the blood for the doors of the Israelite's homes. The lamb's blood purchased the lives of those who were the firstborn. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement.” Lev. 17:11.

According to the Mishnah, there was a special way the lamb was traditionally prepared for roasting in the days of the Temple. In preparing the lamb, its intestines were removed and a stick of a pomegranate tree was thrust through the lamb from bottom to the top in a vertical position. Then the lamb's body was held open, to insure it roasts on the inside too, by placing a stick in a horizontal position and tying a leg on each end. This picture is obviously prophetic; Zroah means “Outstretched Arm.”

Hallel – Psalm 113-118

Leader: Let us now recite the Hallel, psalm 113.

Halleluyah! Servants of ADONAI, give praise! Give praise to the name of ADONAI! Blessed be the name of ADONAI from this moment on and forever! From sunrise until sunset ADONAI's name is to be praised. ADONAI is high above all nations, his glory above the heavens.

Who is like ADONAI our God, seated in the heights, humbling himself to look on heaven and on earth. He raises the poor from the dust, lifts the needy from the rubbish heap, in order to give him a place among princes, among the princes of his people. He causes the childless woman to live at home happily as a mother of children. Halleluyah!

Rachtza – Washing of hands



Leader: According to ancient tradition, in preparation to receive our celebration meal, we wash our hands again.

Matzah



Leader: Unleavened bread is one of the three biblical foods we are commanded to eat during this feast. Wherever you live, eat matzah.” Exodus 12:20.

Leader: Let us now recite the blessing, and partake in the eating of the matzah.

ALL: Barooch atah Adonai Eloheynu melek ha’olam
Asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu al akhilat matzah.

Blessed are You O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified Us with Your commandments, and commanded us to eat unleavened bread.

Maror



Leader: Maror is ground horseradish. Its bitterness reminds us of the bitter life our ancestors had before being redeemed. When eaten it is supposed to bring tears to your eyes.

Leader: Let us recite the blessing and partake in eating the bitter herbs.

ALL: Barooch ata Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha'olam asher
kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al akhilat maror.

Blessed are You O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified
Us with Your commandments, and commanded us to eat bitter herbs.

Hillel Sandwich



Leader: In memory of the Temple we do as in Hillel's times. He put matzah and bitter herbs together and ate them as a sandwich, to keep the words of Torah, "they shall eat it with matzah and bitter herbs." We dip our herbs in the charoset to remind us that even life's most bitter circumstances can be sweetened by the hope we have in G-d. Let us now eat a Hillel sandwich.

Shulkhan Orekh ... The Festive Meal

Leader: Now let us bless Adonai for our meal.

ALL: Barooch ata Adonai Eloheynu melek ha'olam,
Hamotzee lekhem meen ha'aretz.

Blessed are You O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe,
Who brings forth bread from the earth.

Barekh – Grace After the Meal

Leader: Let us now give thanks to the L-rd for the food we have eaten.

ALL: May the name of Eternal be blessed from now and forevermore. With one voice, we praise our G-d, whose food we have eaten.

Leader: We are back from our festive meal and will now continue by having the children search for the Afikomen.

(After the Afikomen is found)

Leader: For many the Afikomen is a mystery, and many have given different answers as to what the three matzah in the matzah tosh represents. But no one can explain why the middle piece is taken out, broken, wrapped, hidden and brought back later. As we have seen already in our seder there is quite a lot of symbolism. So, let's take a closer look at the Afikomen; it is unleavened, leaven being a picture of sin. In Isaiah 53 we read 9-10 Although he had no violence and had said nothing deceptive, yet it pleased Adonai to crush him with illness, to see if he would present himself as a guilt offering... 12 Therefore I will assign him a share with the great, he will divide the spoil with the mighty, for having exposed himself to death and being counted among sinners, while actually bearing the sin of many and interceding for the

offenders.” And 2 Cor. 5:21, speaking of Yeshua states, G-d made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in G-d’s righteousness.”

The Afikomen is pierced and stripped, we also read in Isaiah 53, 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being {fell} upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. Z’khaeyah (Zechariah) 12:10...and they will look to me,” whom they pierced.” In 1 Kefa (Peter) 2:24 we read He himself bore our sins in his body on the stake, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness – by his wounds you were healed. The picture the matzah tosh is one of “unity” as we mentioned earlier. There are three individual pieces of matzah in the tosh, representing G-d the Father, Yeshua, the Arm of G-d, and Ruach Ha Kodesh (The Holy Spirit), the Breath of G-d. It is the middle piece of matzah, representing Yeshua coming into this world. The wrapping of the Afikomen is symbolic of Yeshua’s death and burial clothes.

Yosef (Joseph) purchased a linen sheet; and after taking Yeshua down he wrapped him in the linen sheet...Mark 15:46. The matzah being brought back out speaks of Yeshua’s resurrection. I know you’re looking for Yeshua, who was executed on the stake. He is not here, because he has been raised – just as he said! Come look at the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell the talmidim (disciples), ‘He has been raised from the dead, and now is going to the Galil ahead of you. You are to see him there.’ Mattityahu (Matthew 28:6-7). Yeshua died and rose from the dead, interestingly enough the word Afikomen is the only Aramaic word in the seder, and it means “He came”. I can’t think of a clearer picture of Messiah Yeshua, then in the Pesach seder, for he is our Passover lamb!

Leader: Let us now bless the L-rd for giving us The Bread of Life!

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo meh-lech ha-o-lahm, ha-motzee
le-khem Meen ha-aretz.. Ah-main.

ALL: Blessed are you O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who brings for
bread from the earth. Amen.

LEADER: Let us all now eat the Afikomen together.

Third Cup – Redemption

Leader: The cup of Redemption is a reminder of the Blood sacrifice made on Pesach. The Lamb that was Sacrificed and Redeemed us from death. Yeshua offering himself up as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins so as to reconcile us back to G-d; redeeming us from the curse that was put on all man kind through the sin of Adam and Havah (Eve). Yeshua asks us all a very important question; a question that he asked his talmidim (disciples) at his last Pesach seder, and he asks all of us today. The question asked can be found in the imagery of an ancient Jewish wedding custom...

Jewish Wedding Proposal

There was a custom in the first century involving marriage. When a young man reached the age for marrying and the family decided who would make an appropriate bride, they would meet together. The young man and his father, and the young woman and her father. And they would negotiate what's called the 'Bride's Price'. Not for the purchase of a bride, the purchase of a woman, that wouldn't be the Jewish way; but to replace the great loss of a daughter.

The price was usually very high. It would correspond to one buying a home for example, a lot of money. When the price had finally been agreed upon, the custom was that the young man's Father would pour a cup of wine and hand it to his son; his son would turn to the young woman, lift the cup and hold it out to her and say, "This cup is a new covenant in my blood which I offer to you." In other words, "I love you and I'll give you my life, will you marry me?" And the woman had a choice; she could take the cup, and give it back to him, and say "no", or she could choose to answer without saying a word by drinking the cup; her way of saying, "I accept your offer and I give you my life in response."

Not very far from the Garden Tomb, or Yeshua's (Jesus') resurrection, Yeshua and his talmidim (disciples) sat together having Passover shortly before he died. The talmidim knew the Passover liturgy very well, Jewish people celebrated it all their lives and they had heard the same liturgy over and over. And then came the 3rd cup. That special cup in the Passover, the cup of redemption. Yeshua lifted the cup as the talmidim expected and offered

thanks, “Blessed are You O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates the Fruit of the Vine.” And then he held it to them, but said something I’m sure they didn’t expect. He said, “This cup is a new covenant in my blood which I offer to you.” Now there are many meanings to this I’m sure. But one of the implications was that Yeshua was saying in common ordinary language to those talmidim, “I love you; and the only picture I can think of that would describe the power of my love for you is the power of a passionate, pure love of a husband for his wife.

Now I don’t know what those talmidim thought that day, I hope to someday ask them. Maybe some chuckled a bit; the picture of Yeshua making a marriage proposal must have seemed totally out of place in a Passover seder. And yet they may have understood the passion and the power of the love of Yeshua, who was willing to die, be buried, and eventually raised, to say “I love you; and as my Father promised I’ll pay the price for you.”

Leader: Let us all now bless the L-rd and drink from the third cup, the cup of redemption.

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo
Meh-lech ha-o-lahm bo-ray pree ha-ga-fen.



Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Kos Eliyahu – The Cup of Elijah

Leader: It is an old tradition to set a place for Elijah the Prophet in hopes he will join the celebration. In Mal. 4:5, he was promised to be one of the ones to come before Mashiach (Messiah) to announce His coming. Traditionally we have a child go to the door and open it to see if Elijah is there. (child opens door).

LEADER: Let us sing Eliyahu HaNavi.

Eliyahu HaNavi- Elijah the Prophet

Eli-ya-hu ha-Navi, Eli-ya-hu ha-Tish-bi

Eli-ya-hu, Eli-ya-hu, Eli-ya-hu ha-Gil-a-di.

Bim-hey-rah b'ya-mey-nu. Ya-vo e-ley-nu

Im Ma-shi-ach ben David. Im Ma-shi-ach ben David.

Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah from Gilead.

Speedily, come soon in our days, bringing the Messiah, Son of David.

The Fourth Cup – The Cup of Praise

Leader: The Cup of Praise is also sometimes called the Cup of Acceptance. It's the last cup of the Pesach seder, however Yeshua did not drink of this cup, he says in Mattityahu (Matthew) 26:29: "I tell you, I will not drink this 'fruit of the vine' again until the day I drink new wine with you in My Father's Kingdom." Yeshua did not drink of this last cup because

his joy would not have been complete because not all Israel had received him as the Messiah promised by the Prophets. Yet Scripture tells us that when Messiah Yeshua does return all Israel will be saved, the complete household of G-d. And He shall be our G-d and we shall be His people. Then He will drink the cup of Praise in Heaven at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.

Let us all now bless the L-rd and drink the Cup of Praise/Acceptance.

ALL: Ba-rooch atah Adonai Elo-hay-noo
Meh-lech ha-o-lahm bo-ray pree ha-ga-fen.



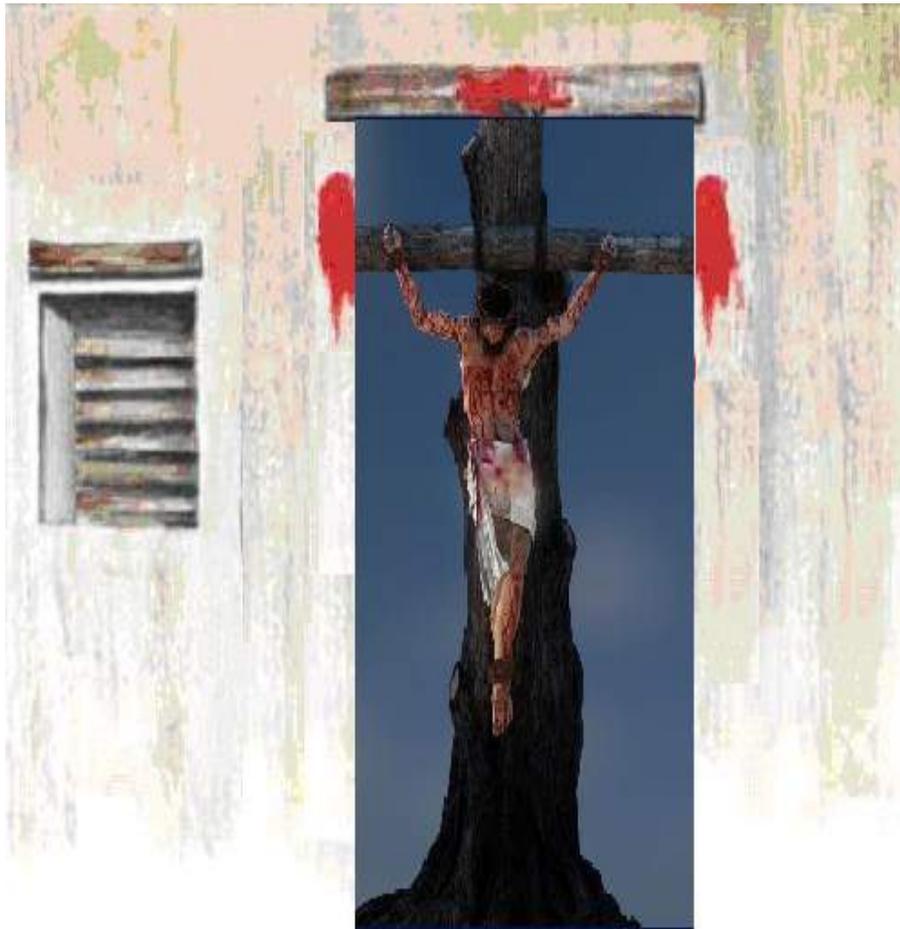
Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Nirtzah ~ The Conclusion of the Seder

Leader: Our Pesach seder has unfolded before us. And we give thanks to G-d for our deliverance through our Pesach Lamb. May we continue to tell the story of Pesach through all our generations. We hope that next year we will celebrate Pesach in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem).

ALL: sing: La-sha-na ha-ba-ha be-ru-sha-la-eem!
NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

Leader: One last thing I'd like to leave you with. G-d commands us to count the omer (Lev. 23:9-16). It is a 49 day count down that links Pesach with Shavuot (Pentecost). The days of counting the Omer directly correspond with the days Yeshua walked among his talmidim after his resurrection. So join us in counting the Omer, and we'll continue unfolding our Jewish wedding on Shavout!



Behold - The Passover Lamb.