

REVISED EDITION

MESSIAH *in* THE FEASTS *of* ISRAEL



SAM NADLER

CELEBRATING THE PASSOVER SEDER

As the passage states, when Messiah Yeshua celebrated the Passover just before His sacrificial death for our atonement, He sent two followers to prepare the room for the *seder*. These preparations focus on the removal of all leavened foods (made with yeast, or *chametz*) from the home. During the eight days of Passover, only foods that have no yeast are eaten. The most well known unleavened food is the bread, *matzah*. There are two reasons why only unleavened bread is eaten during Passover:

The historical reason: Thirty-four hundred years ago, when the Jewish people were about to be delivered by God's mighty arm from bondage in Egypt, God told them to be ready to move on a moment's notice. That's why historically we eat only matzah at Passover. It is sometimes called "the bread of haste," because God said to Israel "you came out of the land of Egypt in haste" (Deuteronomy 16:3).

The spiritual reason: Unleavened bread is made without yeast. Even as leaven or yeast puffs up the bread to make it seem greater than it is, so also the Scripture consistently uses leaven as a picture of pride, sin, and unbelief. This is why yeast was not permitted as part of the normal meal offerings in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 2:11). Thus, Messiah warns His followers regarding false teachers, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6).

Today, in homes where Passover is observed, celebration generally begins after leavened products are removed. The head of the house searches for any crumb of leaven in order to purge his home of defilement.

Traditionally, the father would use a feather and a spoon to sweep up any last bit of chametz, even as over the years Jewish tradition produced many folios of legal guidelines focused on the stringent removal of leaven from homes.³

Yet, for believers, the preparations are not just for the home. Rather, the home reflects the heart. Paul used this idea to correct the prideful Corinthian believers:

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Messiah our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Paul refers to the tradition of cleansing the home to illustrate the need for the cleansing of our hearts. The old leaven refers not to Jewish traditions as some have erroneously thought, but to unconfessed sin in the soul. Yeshua knew, as Paul learned, that without proper preparation there could not be full participation in Passover's spiritual blessings. Why do more believers in Messiah not enjoy the new life He brings? Believers today, like the first century Corinthians, need to "clean out the old leaven," the unconfessed sin that hinders intimacy with the Lord.

Where there is unconfessed sin, there are obstacles in relating to God (Isaiah 59:2). We are saved because of His once-and-for-all atonement for sins (Hebrews 10:12), but in our messy lives we often do not know the joy of that

³ Pesachim 1a-93b

salvation, a joy which only comes from a close walk with God (1 John 1:7). So we confess our sins to the Lord and thank Him for the full fellowship we have in Messiah (1 John 1:9).

So as Yeshua and His disciples approached Jerusalem, the Scripture records that “they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him” (Luke 22:13-14). “The hour” spoken of here would be at sunset, when the new day begins according to the Biblical calendar. Yeshua and His disciples reclined at the table, as was the custom in those days. The guests would be eating at very low tables. A person would lie on his left side at an angle, extend his feet out from the table, and usually eat with his right hand. The person next to him would ‘recline’ with their head somewhat close to his neighbor’s chest, and so on around the table.

In a seder today, after the home is cleansed and the heart is prepared, the woman of the house begins the evening by lighting the candles and reciting a Hebrew blessing over them:

Blessed are you O Lord our God, King of the universe Who has sanctified us through faith in Yeshua the Messiah the Light of the world and in His Name we kindle the Passover Lights.⁴

With the candles lit, the head of the house makes sure each person has a cup of the “fruit of the vine.” The Seder is divided into four sections, and we drink four times from the cup to remember the blessings of redemption in Exodus 6:6-7:

⁴ This is a Messianic version of the blessing.

1. *The Cup of Sanctification* remembers, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”
2. *The Cup of Plagues* remembers, “I will deliver you from their bondage.”
3. *The Cup of Redemption* remembers, “I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.”
4. *The Cup of Praise* remembers, “I will take you for My people.”

THE MIDDLE PIECE

After the first blessing over the cup, tradition has the person leading the *seder* ceremonial hand-washing which is called *urchatz*. However, it was at this point in the *seder* that Yeshua, rather than washing His own hands, girded Himself with a towel, “poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (John 13:5). Messiah’s humility no doubt stunned His disciples, as He demonstrated servant leadership in this act. It also sheds new light on the Scriptures:

Who is like the LORD our God, Who dwells on high,
Who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in
the heavens and in the earth? (Psalm 113:5-6)

Next, we pass around the parsley, or *karpas* in Hebrew, which is the first of the “bitter herbs.” Each person dips his sprig of parsley into salt water and after the traditional Hebrew prayer is chanted, it is eaten together. The green parsley, by its color, illustrates our lives, and the salt water, our tears. In bondage our lives were drenched in grief and

tears. Messiah came to bear our sorrows from sin, and just as God delivered the Jewish people through the salty Red Sea, He also wipes away every bitter tear. As Isaiah wrote:

He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. (Isaiah 53:3-4)

The highlight during this first cup section is the removal of what is called the *Afikomen*. On the Passover table there is a *matzah tash* (bread bag) containing three slices of *matzah*. This bag of *matzah* is also called the *Echad*, or unity.

As a child, this was always a mystery to me. When we would celebrate Passover together around the table, I would wonder, "Why three pieces of *matzah*? How about two or maybe four?"

Yet three it was. And different years, I would learn new traditions as to why three were inside the one. One year, I was taught that the Unity represented the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As the second or middle Patriarch, Isaac, alone was taken out in Genesis 22 to be sacrificed, so also the middle slice of *matzah* alone was taken out at this time. Another year I was taught that the Unity (*Echad*) represented the people of Israel, the priesthood (*cohenim*), and the Lord. As the middle section alone the priesthood made sacrifices to reconcile God and man, so also the middle slice of *matzah* alone was taken out and broken.

At this point in the *seder*, the head of the house removes the middle piece of *matzah*, breaks it in half,

wraps one half in a white linen cloth and hides it. This hidden piece of *matzah* becomes the *Afikomen*, which stays hidden until a child finds it during the third cup section.

Afikomen is a Greek verb meaning “that which comes after.” It is generally referred to as dessert because it is the last item eaten in the meal. We shall return to this mysterious and ancient symbol at the third cup, when the children are encouraged to find the hidden *Afikomen*, and the child who finds it receives a reward from the head of the house.

BITTERNESS OF BONDAGE AND BETRAYAL

As the Seder progresses through the second cup section, the concepts of bondage and deliverance are brought into even clearer focus. The second cup is blessed and everyone partakes together. Then the head of the house takes another piece of *matzah*, holds it up and says, “This is the bread of our affliction.”

The *matzah* presents a vivid picture of Messiah’s body. Both pierced through with holes and striped by the baking process, the look of *matzah* gives an illustration of Messiah’s suffering prophesied in Isaiah 53:5, “For He was pierced through for our transgressions and with His stripes we are healed.”

The *matzah* is passed around and each person breaks off a piece. Together we recite the traditional blessing before eating it:

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha Olam,
Ha-motzti lechem min ha’aretz.*

Blessed are you O Lord our God King of the Universe,
Who brings forth bread from the ground.

Next there is a second partaking of the bitter herbs. This time it is the horseradish or *maror* in Hebrew. The head of the house takes a piece of *matzah* and dips it into the *maror* making sure he puts enough on to bring a tear to his eye when he eats it. He then passes it around the table so each person can put *maror* on a piece of *matzah* (Exodus 12:8):

It is possibly at this point that Yeshua indicated the impending betrayal by one of His own disciples, “Behold, the hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed” (Luke 22:21, 22). John’s account gives us more detail:

Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Yeshua’s bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Yeshua’s breast, he said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” Yeshua answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. (John 13:22-26)

This was the fulfillment of David’s prophecy from Psalm 41:9, “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me” (Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 26:15, 27:3-9).

Though the bitterness of the bondage of sin is echoed by the prophets down through the ages, the goodness of God is magnified in His gracious redemption of the sinner who repents:

I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications. And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; and You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. (Isaiah 38:17)

THE SWEETNESS IN OUR LABOR

Made with chopped apples and spices, *charoseth* symbolizes the mortar and labor used to make bricks for Pharaoh. The head of the house puts *charoseth* on a piece of *matzah* then passes the *charoseth* for all to take and eat (with bitter herbs, optional). The sweet food reminds us that our labor seems sweet, knowing our redemption draws near. Regardless of our bitter difficulties, troubles and trials, those who know the Redeemer, Yeshua, have two promises from God:

- ✧ *The promise of His Presence:* “He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’.” (Hebrews 13:5; Joshua 1:5)
- ✧ *The promise of His Purpose:* “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

The *haggigah*, or egg, reminds us of the temple and the holy day temple sacrifices which are no more. The egg is round and endless, like life eternal. Coming out of bondage is like being brought back from the dead.

Similarly, for our redemption Messiah was raised from the dead. Yeshua said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:29). The redeemed of the Lord shall be with Messiah forever. We have been released from our bondage in sin and the fear of death. Hallelujah!

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

At this point, a child (under thirteen years of age) traditionally asks 'the four questions.' These four are summarized by one question, "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

1. "On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night do we eat *Matzah*, unleavened bread?"
2. "On all other nights we eat vegetables of all kinds; why on this night do we eat bitter herbs?"
3. "On all other nights we do not dip at all; why on this night do we dip twice?"
4. "On all other nights we sit upright or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?"

These four questions allow the children to get involved in the *seder*, and in response the head of the house tells the Passover story from Exodus 1-12. God saw Israel in Egyptian bondage and sent Moses to demand from Pharaoh the release of the Jewish people. Pharaoh refused, so God sent a series of ten judgments upon Egypt: Blood, Frogs, Vermin, Flies, Pestilence, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, and Slaying of the Firstborn.

PASSOVER TODAY?

“This month shall be the beginning of months for you.” Though traditional Judaism celebrates New Year’s in the month of Tishrei (September-October), the biblical year was to begin during the Passover month of Nisan (March-April). Why did God want the year to begin with Passover? Because it is the redemption of God’s people from bondage, and with God, all things begin with redemption.

Just as Passover was to mark Israel’s redemptive beginning as a nation, so also the Lamb of God is your redemptive beginning when you believe in Yeshua: “if any person is in Messiah he is a new creation, old things have passed away, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The annual religious life of the Jewish people is to be based upon and oriented around Passover, in order to give us direction and stability. In the same way, our lives need to be based upon and oriented around redemption in Messiah, the Lamb of God. This is the sure foundation upon which all else will properly develop. It is this foundation that determines your security in any storm that may come throughout the year, and for the rest of your life.

Should believers today celebrate Passover? Consider: we know that it was understood and celebrated by all first-century believers. Paul could readily refer to Passover regarding spiritual areas of their lives because they all understood the meaning of it. The apostles’ method of discipleship included teaching on the Feasts of Israel as the basis to understand the salvation experience (Passover,

Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits), their sanctification and growth in the Holy Spirit (Shavuot), and their future hope in Messiah (Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles). I wonder if Paul could so easily use such references in our congregations and churches today. Paul and the other apostles might well be shocked at the lack of teaching and awareness regarding the biblical feasts among New Covenant congregations.

Moreover, Passover was relevant to all first century believers, and is a present picture of living the fulfilled life, not only a record of some ancient event. It is a constant reminder that we are no longer slaves in the bondage of sin because Messiah our Passover has been sacrificed. We are now free to follow and honor the Lord, and to live as new creations through Messiah's gracious atonement. It demonstrates that we are free from bondage: not free to foolishly do as we please, but free to follow God into the Land of Promise, and please Him in all aspects of our lives.

Paul was not telling the Corinthians that they should start keeping the Passover; they already were. Paul's point is that Passover should be celebrated properly; with a pure heart, otherwise it is a demonstration of hypocrisy. Paul understood that for believers, Passover was to be celebrated even as Moses taught. In 1 Corinthians 5:8, Paul uses the very same Greek word *heortazo* that is used for "celebrate" in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the *Tanakh*:

Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance. (Exodus 12:14)

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians (and to us) “therefore let us celebrate the feast,” he may have been thinking of this truth Moses shared with Israel. We can see clearly the Messianic fulfillment of the Passover in Yeshua, and we should celebrate it with an eternal perspective in our Messiah.

Some have suggested that Paul’s use of “old leaven” might refer to the Jewish traditions. Thus as believers we would need to celebrate Passover only in the Lord’s Supper, not as “the Jews do,” for that would be “old leaven.” But this idea is wrong. Leaven refers to moral corruption, not traditional observance. Of course, Yeshua himself celebrated Passover according to the traditional customs of the day, and He was not sinning in doing so.

“Old” in Greek is the same word used in Ephesians 4:22, “in reference to your former (old) manner of life.” This “old yeast” (1 Corinthians 5:7) refers to the old self that is crucified with Messiah (Romans 6:6). Paul is not only telling believers to keep celebrating Passover, but to celebrate honoring Messiah, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. We do not celebrate as in the former manner of life, with malice and wickedness, but with a pure attitude, and in accordance with the truth of God.

Are believers obligated to celebrate Passover in a traditional Jewish style, or according to a particular custom (many of which we have not even covered here)? Not at all: the Scriptures do not obligate a particular method of observance (Colossians 2:16-17).

However, biblically, celebrating Passover is normal for followers of Messiah. It gives insight on the spiritual truths of the Scriptures and is a healthy reminder to live

a life pleasing to the Lord. New Covenant believers and congregations that do celebrate Passover and appreciate these “Jewish roots” are engaging in normal biblical practice. They are better equipped to recognize God’s faithfulness, and how they do not support the root, but rather that it is the root which supports them (Romans 11:18).

Therefore, let us “keep the feast” this year and every year, not only so that we may better be disciplined, but to invite our Jewish friends and family to Passover to hear the Good News that Messiah is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

QUESTIONS FOR PESACH:

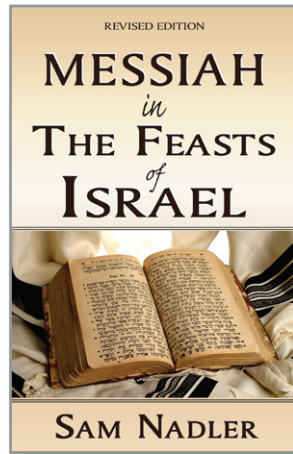
1. What is a *seder*? What are the four cups?
2. Which verse in the Torah makes a sign a requirement for judgment to pass over the home? What was that sign?
3. Why did God require a sacrifice lamb for Isaac?
4. What would happen to the morally upright Jewish family who did not put the Lamb’s blood on the door?
5. Why did the year begin with Passover?
6. Why should a follower of Messiah keep Passover?

REDEMPTION IN

GOD'S WORK	FEAST	LEV. 23	MONTH
GAINING HIS PEOPLE	PASSOVER	v. 4-5	NISSAN 1 ST MONTH
	UNLEAVENED BREAD	v. 6-8	NISSAN 1 ST MONTH
	FIRSTFRUITS	v. 9-14	NISSAN 1 ST MONTH
GROUNDING HIS PEOPLE	WEEKS OR PENTECOST	v. 15-21	SIVAN 3 RD MONTH
	WORK IN THE FIELDS	v. 22	SUMMER MONTHS
GATHERING HIS PEOPLE	TRUMPETS OR NEW YEAR	v. 23-25	TISHREI 7 TH MONTH
	DAY OF ATONEMENT	v. 26-32	TISHREI 7 TH MONTH
	BOOTHES OR TABERNACLES	v. 33-44	TISHREI 7 TH MONTH

THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

MEANING	FULFILLMENT	GOD'S RESULT
RANSOM OF SOUL	1 COR. 5:7	SALVATION
REMOVAL OF SIN	1 COR. 5:8	
RESURRECTION OF SAVIOR	1 COR. 15:21-23	
REDEEMED BODY	JAMES 1:18 ACTS 2:1-10	SANCTIFICATION
REACHING AND REAPING	MATT. 28:18-20 ACTS 1:8	
RAPTURE OF HIS BODY	1 COR. 15:52 1 THES. 4:16, 17	GLORIFICATION
REGENERATION OF ISRAEL	ZECH. 12:10-13:1 MATT. 23:39	
REIGN OF MESSIAH	ZECH. 14:16 REV. 7:9, 15	



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Messiah in the Feasts of Israel

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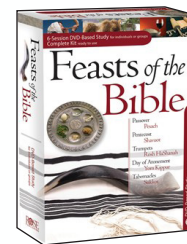


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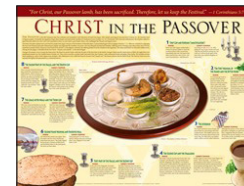


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