

## **Pesach Described**

Chosen People Ministries

### **The removal of leaven**

Before the beginning of the Passover, all leaven, which is a symbol of sin (1 Cor. 5:6-8), must be removed from the Jewish home. The house is cleaned from top to bottom and anything containing leaven is removed. Then, the evening before the Passover, the father of the house takes the traditional cleaning implements: a feather, a wooden spoon, and a bag, and searches the house for any specks of leaven which might have been missed (my mother used to leave it on top of the refrigerator so my father shouldn't spend all night hunting!).

### **Washing the hands**

Once the leaven is removed, the family sits around the table and ceremonially washes their hands with a special laver and towel. Jesus also took part in this tradition, but rather than wash his hands, he got up from the table and washed the feet of his disciples, giving us an unparalleled lesson in humility (John 13:2-17).



### **Lighting the candles**

Once the house and the participants are ceremonially clean, the Passover Seder can begin. The woman of the house says a blessing and lights the Passover candles. It is appropriate that the woman brings light into the home, because it was through the woman that the light of the world, Messiah Jesus, came into the world (Gen. 3:15)

### **Haggadah**

Haggadah means "the telling" - the telling of the story of Passover. The story is told in response to four questions asked by the children: *why is this night different from all other nights?* The father proceeds to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, reading from a book called "The Haggadah" and using symbols and object lessons in order to keep the attention of the little ones.

### **The first cup of wine**

The Seder begins with a blessing recited over the first of four cups of wine: "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine." Jesus himself blessed the first cup in Luke 22:17-18.

## **The second cup of wine**

The second cup is to remind us of the Ten Plagues and the suffering of the Egyptians when they hardened their heart to the Lord. In order not to rejoice over the suffering of our enemies (Prov. 24:17), we spill a drop of wine (which is a symbol of joy) as we recite each of the Ten Plagues, thus remembering that our joy is diminished at the suffering of others.

## **Afikomen**

A very curious tradition now takes place. At the table is a bag with three compartments and three pieces of matzah. The middle piece of matzah is taken out, broken, and half is put back into the bag. The other half is wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden, to be taken out later, after the meal.



## **The Seder plate**

The rabbis have devised a series of object lessons to keep the attention of the little ones during the Passover Seder. These items are tasted by each person, as each is instructed to feel as if they themselves had taken part in the flight from Egypt.

## **Karpas - greens**

The first item taken is the karpas, or greens (usually parsley), which is a symbol of life. The parsley is dipped in salt water, a symbol of tears, and eaten, to remind us that life for our ancestors was immersed in tears.

## **Beitzah - egg**

A roasted egg is on the Seder plate to bring to mind the roasted daily temple sacrifice that no longer can be offered because the temple no longer stands. In the very midst of the Passover Seder, the Jewish people are reminded that they have no sacrifice to make them righteous before God.

## **Maror - bitter herb**

This is usually ground horseradish, and enough is eaten (with Matzah) to bring a tear to the eyes. We cannot appreciate the sweetness of redemption unless we first experience for ourselves the bitterness of slavery.

## **Charoset**

Charoset is a sweet mixture of chopped apples, chopped nuts, honey, cinnamon, and a little Manischewitz grape wine (kosher for Passover) just for color! This sweet, pasty, brown mixture is symbolic of the mortar that our ancestors used to build bricks in the land of Egypt. Why do we remember an experience so bitter with something so sweet? The rabbis have a good insight: even the bitterest of labor can be sweet when our redemption draws nigh. This is especially true for

believers in the Messiah. We can find sweetness even in the bitterest of experiences because we know our Lord's coming is near.

### **Shankbone of the Lamb**

In every Jewish home, on every Seder plate, is a bare shankbone of a lamb. In the book of Exodus, Jewish firstborns were spared from the Angel of Death by applying the blood of a spotless, innocent lamb applied to the doorpost of their homes as God brought the people from slavery into freedom. Today, we believe Jesus is that perfect Passover Lamb, and when we apply His blood to the doorposts of our heart, we too go from death into life, from the slavery of sin into the freedom of being a redeemed child of God. As John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus coming towards him, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)



### **The Meal**

Ah, even though the wonders of modern technology, we still cannot bring you the most memorable part of the Passover... the meal, just like grandma used to make! Just picture it: steaming hot chicken soup with huge, fluffy matzah balls; some matzah; slices of pungent, home-made gefilte fish with just-ground make-you-cry horseradish; more matzah; chopped liver (with lots of schmaltz and crunchy fried onions) on a bed of lettuce; more matzah; enough delectable green salad to feed a colony of hungry rabbits; more matzah; more crispy fried onions on the side; more matzah... and that's just the appetizer!

Next comes the meal... can you smell it? Tender, sweet brisket with cabbage; more matzah; homemade flanken; stewed chicken, roasted chicken, broiled chicken, boiled chicken, sautéed chicken, baked chicken; more matzah; a whole roasted turkey; more matzah; fresh-cut green beans with onions; more matzah; carrot and prune tzimmes; more matzah; sweet potato and raisin tzimmes; more matzah; home-made mashed potatoes swimming in butter; more matzah... and we haven't even gotten through the appetizer!

Did you save room for dessert? Well, you will have to wait, because now it's time go on with the Seder!

### **The Search for the Afikomen**

After the meal is finished, the leader of the Seder lets the children loose to hunt for the Afikomen, which was wrapped in a napkin and hidden before the meal. The house is in a ruckus as everyone rushes around to be the first to find the Afikomen and claim the prize as grandpa redeems it from the lucky locator. The going rate is \$5.00! Once the leader has retrieved the Afikomen, he breaks it up into pieces and distributes a small piece to everyone seated around the table. Jewish people don't

really understand this tradition, but traditions don't need to be understood - just followed! However, it is widely believed that these pieces of Afikomen bring a good, long life to those who eat them.

The tradition perhaps dates back to the time of Jesus. If this is the case, then Luke 22:19 takes on a greater meaning: "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'" For Jesus the Messiah would have taken the middle one of the three pieces of matzah, the piece that stood for the priest or mediator between God and the people, broken it as His body would be broken, wrapped half in a linen napkin as he would be wrapped in linen for burial, hidden it as he would be buried, brought it back as he would be resurrected, and distributed it to everyone seated with him, as He would distribute His life to all who believe. As He did this, he was conscious that this middle piece of matzah represented His own, spotless body given for the redemption of His people. As the matzah is striped and pierced, His own body would be striped and pierced, and it is by those wounds that we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). This middle piece of matzah, or the Afikomen, is our communion bread.

### **Third Cup**

The third cup of wine is taken after the meal. It is the cup of redemption, which reminds us of the shed blood of the innocent Lamb which brought our redemption from Egypt. We see that Jesus took the third cup in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, "In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" This was not just any cup, it was the cup of redemption from slavery into freedom. This is our communion cup.

### **Fourth Cup**

The fourth cup is the Cup of Hallel. Hallel in Hebrew means "praise," and we see in the beautiful High Priestly Prayer of John 17, that Jesus took time to praise and thank the Lord at the end of the Passover Seder, his last supper. The spotless Passover Lamb had praise on his lips as he went to his death.



### **Elijah's Cup**

A place setting remains empty for Elijah the prophet, the honored guest at every Passover table. The Jewish people expect Elijah to come at Passover and announce the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). So a place is set, a cup is filled with wine, and hearts are expectant for Elijah to come and announce the Good News. At the end of the Seder meal, a child is sent to the door to open it and see if Elijah is there. Every year, the child returns, disappointed, and the wine is poured out without

being touched. My people wait and hope for Messiah - they do not realize that Messiah has already come. But those of us who believe in Yeshua know that He is the one the prophets spoke of. He is the spotless, unblemished Passover Lamb, whose body was broken for us, whose blood was shed, and who now lives to distribute His life to all of us who apply His blood to the doorpost of our hearts and have passed from death into His eternal life.