

April 5, 2017

Celebrate PASSOVER 2017
April 10-18
YESHUA'S - RESSURRECTION
April 16



I pray you are blessed by this Special Letter.

Jacob and his children had arrived in Egypt to be close Joseph; he was second in command to King Pharaoh, and with his ingenuity had saved the people of Egypt, and by extension those from neighboring countries, from death by famine. Jacob

and his children were settled in the city of Goshen and prospered wonderfully-- their numbers grew and grew.

As long as Jacob's son's are alive, the Children of Israel are accorded honor and respect, but after the passing of Joseph, "There arose a new king in Egypt who knew not Joseph"--some commentaries say, chose not to know Joseph--"And he said to his people. 'Behold the Children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply...'"([Exodus 1:8-10](#)).

Enslavement The Egyptians' way of dealing with their "Jewish Problem" is to enslave the Jews. They are all forced into backbreaking labor, compelled to build cities of treasure houses for Pharaoh. But still, the Jews continue to multiply, to Pharaoh's eyes, at an ever frightening pace. To put a stop to this, Pharaoh summons the Jewish midwives, Shira and Puah, and commands them to kill all Jewish newborn males. This, he is certain, will put an end to the propagation of this race. When the midwives defy his order, he commands that they cast all the newborn males into the Nile--his stargazers had predicted that the savior of the Jews would die through water--and Pharaoh hopes his plan will ensure an early death for any potential Jewish leader.

Moses' Birth The wife of the Levite Amram, gives birth to a son. Because he is born three months early, she is able to conceal him for that amount of time. When she can no longer hide him, she builds a small water-proof cradle and puts her child on the brink of the Nile. The child's sister, Miriam, hides among the brush to watch the child.

Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe in the river when she sees the floating cradle. When she opens it and sees the weeping baby, she realizes that this is a Jewish child, but her compassion is aroused and she resolves to take the baby home. She names him Moses "he who was drawn from the water."

Miriam approaches the princess and offers to find a wet-nurse for the baby. When Pharaoh's daughter accepts, Miriam brings her Jockeyed, whom Pharaoh's daughter hires to nurse and care for the child. When Moses grows older, he is returned to the palace, where Pharaoh's daughter raises him like a son.

Moses Is Appointed Leader As a young man, Moses leaves the palace and discovers the hardship of his brethren. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and kills the Egyptian. The next day he sees two Jews fighting; when he

admonishes them, they reveal his deed of the previous day, and Moses is forced to flee to Midian. There he rescues Jethro's daughters, marries one of them-- Zipporah--and becomes a shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks.

In the meantime, the plight of the Children of Israel in Egypt worsens, "and their cry rose up to G-d."

As Moses is shepherding his flock, he comes upon a burning bush, in which G-d appears to him and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand: "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me." Moses objects, citing a speech defect he acquired while in the palace, and so Moses' brother, Aaron, is appointed to serve as his spokesman. In Egypt, Moses and Aaron assemble the elders of Israel to tell them that the time of their redemption has come. The people believe; but Pharaoh refuses to let them go and even intensifies the suffering of Israel. He increases the burden of labor on his Hebrew slaves, commanding their taskmasters to cease bringing the Israelites straw to make the bricks. Now, they must go to the fields to collect the straw themselves, but maintain the same quota of brick production.

Moses can no longer bear the pain of his brethren; he turns to G-d saying, "Why have You done evil to this people?" G-d promises that the redemption is close at hand, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

G-d then reveals Himself to Moses. Employing the "four expressions of redemption," He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the Land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

The Exodus

The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh's resistance and he literally begs the Children of Israel to leave his land. Following G-d's command, they hastily depart; so hastily that there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments, emerging from Egypt a wealthy nation.

The Children of Israel are commanded to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children.

Soon after allowing the Children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the sea. G-d tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians. Moses and the Children of Israel sing a song of praise and gratitude to G-d.

PASSOVER OBSERVED AS FOLLOWS:

Introduction to a Christian Seder Recovering Passover for Christians Dennis Bratcher

The Festival of Passover

Passover is the oldest and most important religious festival in Judaism, commemorating God's deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and his creation of the Israelite people. Passover is actually composed of two festivals, The Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover (which is sometimes used to refer to the single day and sometimes to the entire span of both festivals).

The festival of Passover, known as Pesach, begins at sunset on the 14th of Nisan (usually in March or April) **APRIL 10**, and marks the beginning of a seven day celebration that includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

-1- The focal point of Passover is a communal meal, called the Seder (which means "order," because of the fixed order of service), **which is a time of rejoicing and celebration at the deliverance for the Hebrews that God accomplished in the exodus**. Sometimes the meals during the entire period of Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are referred to as Seder meals, called the first Seder, the Second Seder, etc., although usually only the first two nights are considered Seder meals.

Unlike the most Holy days of Christianity that are observed in Church, since the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70 Passover has been celebrated in the home with family and friends as they eat a meal together. It is customary to invite guests to share the Seder meal, especially newcomers to the community. The actual Seder meal in most Jewish homes is an elaborate feast, with food, games for the children, and plenty of time to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. It is not unusual for a Seder to last three to four hours.

The Seder involves everyone present since they all have a Haggadah (Heb: "telling," the printed order of service, reading, and songs) and are called to share in reading and singing the story. While the father or grandfather is usually the leader of the service, others have roles as well. The mother of the home lights the festival candles that signal the beginning of Passover, the youngest child asks the four questions, the children help eliminate all Chametz, leaven, from the house, search for the hidden Afikomen (a symbolic piece of Matzah, unleavened bread) and open the door for Elijah, the parents or the grandparents tell the story of the exodus, and various others

are designated to read or lead certain portions of the service.

Passover is really more than a festival. It is an elaborate teaching experience, especially for the children, intended to call people to their identity as the People of God. By using all of the senses, the Passover Seder tells the story of God's grace in history and calls the participants to experience and share in the story as their own story. Passover becomes more than simply a service or a time; it becomes a way to confess faith in the One who has acted in history, and for Jews expresses the hope that He will continue to act in bringing deliverance to all people everywhere.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Heb: *matsoth*; transliterated in various ways as Matzot, Mazzot for the plural form, or Matzoh, Matzah for the singular, or simply Matzo) is a seven day festival that is really a part of and continuation of the Passover celebration. It actually begins on the 15th of Nisan in the Jewish calendar and lasts until the 21st, although as early as Josephus in the 1st century BC the entire festival was counted as eight days (*Antiquities*, 2:15:1). In preparation for Passover, all *chametz* or leavened food (food with yeast) is removed from the house and cannot be eaten during the seven days of the Festival. The unleavened bread symbolizes the haste with which the Israelites had to flee from Egypt. Since they did not have time for the bread to rise in order to have provisions for the journey, they had to bake it without yeast (Ex 12:11, Deut 16:3).

The second night of Passover (the Second Seder) is celebrated as the First Day of the Omer (an omer is a sheaf of barley), since on this night an omer was brought to the Temple as an offering. This reflects the likely origin of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as an agricultural celebration that the Israelites adapted from the surrounding Canaanites marking the beginning of Spring barley harvest. Some elements of the Passover itself may have had origins in the pastoral culture of the Middle East in observing the Spring birthing of livestock. Throughout history, Jews and Christians alike have adopted and transformed secular and pagan celebrations and used them to express their own faith confessions.

However, the origins of the festivals are immaterial to their celebration within the community of Faith. The fact that in Scripture the two festivals are always linked as a memorial to the exodus suggests that whatever the origin, the Israelites combined the festivals very early in their history. The origins are important to students of Scripture and history, but do not really impact the festival as a celebration of God and faith.

The First Day of the Omer begins the 49 day countdown (7 weeks of 7 days) to the celebration of Shavuot, known in the Old Testament as

the Feast of Weeks or in Christian Tradition as Pentecost (50 days, counting from the first night of Passover). The period between the two festivals is know as the Days of the Omer, and serves to tie the two festivals together into a season of sacred time.

While originally an agricultural festival celebrating the beginning of the wheat harvest, in Jewish tradition Shavuot has come to be celebrated as a commemoration of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, a service of thanksgiving for the commandments and instructions by which the Israelites were to live out in practical ways the implications of being the people of God. By using the Days of the Omer to link Passover and Shavuot, they made obvious the theological link between the grace of God in the exodus and the call to faithful response and obedience represented in God's gift of the Torah.

The last day of Passover is often treated like a Sabbath, with special prayers and no work done.

Christian Passover

There has been increasing interest among Christians in this ancient festival. There are various reasons for this renewed interest: an increasing sensitivity to cultural and societal problems and a corresponding desire to learn about others; a renewed awareness of the importance of the Old Testament Scriptures as Christian Scripture; a desire or even a need in our modern world to recover a sense of the sacred through liturgy and sacrament; the willingness to find new and innovative ways to worship; and perhaps even the enjoyment that comes from acknowledging the continuity with a 3,000 year old community of faith.

As a result, there has been an explosion of interest in adapting the Passover festival to Christianity. Various organizations, such as "Jews for Jesus," have long promoted Christian Passover services as a means for Jews to retain their cultural heritage while confessing Christian faith. They have also used the Christian Passover as a means to communicate to Christians the Jewish religious heritage that they value.

Our goal here in presenting a Christian adaptation of Passover is to retain the theological, confessional, and educational dimensions of the service. That is, it is presented as a way for people of Christian Faith to express that faith in the context of a gathered community by participating symbolically in the story of salvation. It is presented very deliberately and purposefully as a Christian service, with no apologies. Yet, there has also been a deliberate attempt to preserve the spirit of the Jewish traditions and experience in the service, and to respect the faith journey of Israelites and Jews across the centuries.

For that reason, apart from the fact that it will likely be Christians who are participating in the service, the thoroughly Christian dimension will come at the end of the service. After all, that is really how God chose to work in history: to the Jew first, and then also to the rest of us!



1. These festivals are based on a lunar rather than a solar calendar, which is why the dates from year to year vary widely; they fall in March or April (See [The Hebrew Calendar of the Old Testament](#)). Nisan is a name borrowed by the Israelites during the Exile from the Babylonian calendar. The Hebrew equivalent of Nisan is Abib (Ex 23:15). In the Babylonian system, Nisan is the first month, beginning the year in the Spring (March-April). In the older agricultural calendar of Israel, the year began in the Fall immediately following the harvests (Ex 23:16, the Babylonian month of Tishri, September-October). Since a lunar calendar begins each month with the new moon, the important Israelite religious festivals of Passover-Unleavened Bread and Succoth or Tabernacles begin in mid-month, the time of the full moon.

Jesus' Resurrection Jesus' Resurrection

Jesus 'Resurrection is humanity's turning point from destruction to glory and salvation.

For the first three centuries, the Church celebrated the real meaning of Easter in connection with the Jewish Passover.

The Passover began on the evening of the full moon in the Jewish month of Nisan, which coincided with the Spring Equinox.

As the crucifixion occurred on the first day of the feast, early Christians found a scriptural correlation between Jesus and the

sacrificial lamb. The Apostle Paul refers to this in his first letter to the Corinthian Church where he states: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:7-8) The flexibility of Passover allowed the early Church to celebrate Christ's resurrection any day of the week on which the third day of the festival happened to fall.

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Dear Friends;

This is one of our times God set apart to reverence the Passover, death, burial, and resurrection of the sacrificial Lamb of God. I pray God will reveal Himself to you in a powerful way during the next week as we seek Him with all of our heart.

God has a great call on my partners and intercessors. The more we seek Him, worship Him and Praise Him, and obey Him, for all He has done for us, the more our faith will soar. I am preparing our outreach to the Native American Women in the Cherokee and Creek nations that will release great freedom and blessings as we encourage women who paid a terrible price because of who they were. Next week you will receive the details.

HAVE BLESSED CELEBRATIONS.