

The Seder Meal:

A Messianic Passover Haggadah



This is an abbreviated celebration of the Seder Meal of the Jewish feast of Passover, adapted to explain the messianic significance of this Jewish feast. It would ideally be celebrated in a family setting, on or before Holy Thursday, as a way to foster appreciation of, and anticipation for the liturgical celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

Items normally used:

- Candle(s)
- Wine (or juice for children)
- Matzoh or unleavened flat bread (spread a flour and water paste on a cookie sheet with a little salt. Prick with a fork and bake)
- Parsley (or another green vegetable)
- Salt water
- A white cloth or napkin
- Maror (bitter herbs): usually a mixture of horseradish and romaine lettuce
- Haroset, made from apples, cinnamon, honey, nuts, and wine
- More wine
- Roast lamb (or any meat)
- The rest of the meal
- You may want to read from the 12th chapter of the Book of Exodus in the Bible.

Introduction

FATHER (or oldest man): The Passover/Easter stories have been told over and over for thousands of years, stories about miraculous change from misery to peace, slavery to freedom, sin to grace.

One of the last things Jesus did with his disciples was to celebrate Passover and retell the story to them. It's no coincidence Jesus chose the Passover meal for what the Church now celebrates as the Mass and Eucharist. God gave us the Passover celebration and He used the same celebration to teach us even more about His love. God cared for His people, our ancestors, long ago and He cares for His children today.

We Light the Candles

FATHER: As we light the candles, we pray for the light of the Spirit of God to bring the special meaning of Passover and Easter to each one of us.

MOTHER or oldest woman (light the candles): Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has chosen each one of us out of all the people of the world and made us holy by Your Word, and in Whose Name we light these celebration lights.

FATHER: As the light for the celebration of redemption is lit by a woman, we remember that Jesus, our Redeemer, the promised Light of the world, came into the world through the obedience of a woman, too, who has become the Blessed Mother of us all. (Father pours the first cup of wine/juice.)

The Four Cups of Wine

FATHER: God told Moses, "Now you will see what I will do" (Ex.6:1), and He made four promises about how he would save his people.

ALL: "I will bring you out of Egypt...

I will free you from slavery...

I will save you by my own hand...

I will take you to be my own people, and I will be your God..."

FATHER: To remember these four promises, we drink from our cups four times.

The First Cup (Kiddush) -The Cup of Sanctification

FATHER: When Jesus began His last Passover supper, He offered a cup to His disciples and said, "Take this, all of you, and drink from it" (Lk.22:17). Let's hold up our first cup together and bless the Lord!

ALL: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. (All drink.)

Washing of Hands (Urkhatz)

This ritual purification was part of the Jewish ceremony. At the Mass of the Lord's Supper, we re-enact how Jesus, at the Last Supper, poured water into a bowl and washed the disciples' feet for them, like a servant.

Parsley dipped in salt water (Karpas)

FATHER: Why do we celebrate Passover? God commands His people to celebrate certain special holidays every year forever. (Holding up the Parsley): The Passover/Easter holidays come in the spring, when the earth turns green with new life. Only God can create life and keep it alive. This green parsley is the sign of life. (Holding up the salt water): But while the Israelites were still slaves in Egypt, their life was miserable. The salt water stands for their tears. We know our life can be miserable and full of tears when we live in Satan's world. We dip our parsley in the salt water and eat it to remind us of our ancestors' tears and of how miserable our own sin makes us. We also remember how God parted the salty Red Sea to lead His people to new life.

ALL: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the earth. (All eat some Parsley dipped in salt water.)

The Four Questions (Ma Nishtanah)

1. YOUNGEST BOY or girl, if no sons (standing): Why is this night so different from all other nights?

FATHER: On this night we celebrate how God set His people free from slavery in Egypt under Pharo, and how Jesus sets us free from slavery of sin.

The Unleavened Bread (Matzoh)

2. YOUNGEST BOY: On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread. On this night why do we eat only unleavened bread?

FATHER: On Passover we only eat matzoh, unleavened bread, because when the Jewish people left Egypt, they were in such a hurry they didn't have time to let their dough rise. Instead, they baked it flat.

We save half for after the meal. It's wrapped in a white cloth just as Jesus' body was wrapped for burial. (Wrap the matzoh in a napkin.)

Kids, please close your eyes... (Hide the matzoh half somewhere in the room.)

Just like I've hidden the broken matzoh, Jesus' body was put in a tomb, hidden for a little while. But just as the special piece of matzoh will come out again to finish our celebration, Jesus came alive again to take us to heaven when we

finish our lives. Now we share this piece of bread made with no yeast--a sign of Jesus, Who has no sin. (Pass the other matzoh half.)

All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. (All eat some matzoh.)

“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 1Cor. 5:7-8

The Bitter Herbs (Maror)

3. YOUNGEST BOY: On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables. On this night why do we eat only bitter ones?

FATHER: On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, but on Passover we eat maror, bitter ones, to remember how bitter life was for our ancestors in Egypt. (Holding up the horseradish mix): "...the Egyptians became afraid of the Israelite slaves and made them work even more. They made their lives bitter with hard work making brick and mortar and doing all kinds of work in the fields." (Ex.1:12-14) Scoop some maror onto a piece of matzoh and let the bitter taste bring tears to your eyes. Remember with compassion the tears our ancestors cried in their slavery long ago, and remember the bitterness of our own slavery to sin when we do not allow Jesus to set us free.

ALL: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who set us apart by His Word and commanded us to eat bitter herbs. (All eat some bitter herbs.)

The Haroset

4. YOUNGEST BOY: On all other nights we don't dip our vegetables even once. On this night why do we dip them twice?

FATHER: On all other nights we don't dip our vegetables even once, but tonight we dip them twice. We've already dipped the parsley in salt water. (Holding up the haroset): The Israelites worked very hard to make brick and clay to build cities for Pharaoh. We remember this in a mixture called haroset, made from apples, cinnamon, honey, nuts, and wine. Now again scoop some maror onto a piece of matzoh, but this time, before eating it, dip it into the sweet haroset.

ALL: We dip the bitter into the sweet to remember that even the most bitter things in life can be sweetened by our hope in God. (All eat likewise.)

FATHER: The Israelite were told to eat the Passover quickly, their coats ready, their walking sticks in their hands, their sandals on their feet, ready to leave the bondage of Egypt. Today we may all relax and freely enjoy the Passover Seder.

The Second Cup: The Cup of Plagues

FATHER: Moses went to Pharaoh with God's command, "Let my people go!" But God warned Moses that Pharaoh wouldn't easily agree. The Lord sent plagues, but with each plague, Pharaoh refused and made his heart harder against God. With the tenth and most awful plague, God broke through Pharaoh's hard heart.

ALL: The Lord said, "On that night I will pass through Egypt and every firstborn person and animal will die, and I will punish all the demon gods of Egypt for I AM the Lord" (Ex.12:12)

FATHER: Wine is a sign of joy and we are certainly filled with joy that God has set us free. But we should also remember how much that freedom cost. Many lives were lost to save our people from slavery in Egypt. But an even greater price was paid to save us from slavery to sin--the death of Jesus, God's only Son. When we say the name of each plague, dip a finger into your cup and let a drop fall onto your napkin, making the cup of joy a little less full as we remember the cost of our freedom.

ALL: Blood... Frogs... Lice... Wild Animals... Cattle Disease... Boils... Hail... Locusts... Darkness... Death of the Firstborn! (don't drink any wine yet)

The Passover Lamb

FATHER: In telling the Passover story, three things absolutely must be mentioned: the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the Passover lamb.

ALL: We've eaten the matzoh to remind us how quickly our ancestors left Egypt. We've tasted the bitter herbs to remind us of the bitter life they lived there.

FATHER (holding up the lamb meat): On Passover, the Hebrews sacrificed and ate a lamb, marking their door posts with its blood. Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb of God Who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world.

God told Moses, "The lamb must be perfect" and when it is sacrificed, "the people are to mark their door frames with some of the blood... They are to eat the meat that night, along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Eat quickly, with your coat ready, your shoes on your feet, and your walking stick in your hand. It is the Lord's Passover. The blood will show your obedience; when I see the blood, I will pass over you and no plague will touch you when I punish Egypt." (Ex.12:3-13)

The Cup of Joy

FATHER: Everyone drink for a second time now. This is the Cup of Joy, and with it, we will have dinner! (Remove Seder plate from table.) Serve the rest of the meal. Everyone feasts.

The "Afikomen" (After the meal, the prayers continue...)

FATHER (returning Seder plate to the table): It is time to share the afikomen, the hidden matzoh. Who can find it? (Children search for the hidden matzoh and one

gives it to Father.) Remember, this piece of matzoh, made without leaven, is a symbol of the promised Messiah, Jesus. It was hidden and now it is back. Jesus was buried and rose from the dead. This special matzoh is the last food eaten at Passover so that its taste stays with us. It's shared like the Passover lamb was shared from the time our ancestors were freed from Egypt until the destruction of the Temple, after Jesus' death. At the Last Supper, Jesus celebrated this Passover meal and broke the matzoh and gave thanks to the Lord.

ALL: Blessed are you, O God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

It was here that Jesus added the words: "This is my Body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) Jesus changed the significance of the matzoh forever, and gives us His Body at every Holy Mass.

FATHER (breaking the matzoh into pieces): The matzoh, like the Eucharist, is broken in small pieces and everyone must eat their own piece, just as each of us must accept Jesus' grace for ourselves. No other person can do it for us. Think about Jesus, the Lamb of God, Whose Body we are privileged to truly receive in the Eucharist, our once and forever Passover sacrifice. Eat this piece of matzoh now, and let its taste stay with you. (All eat.)

The Third Cup: The Cup of Redemption and of Elijah (Eliyahu HaNavi)

FATHER (lifting the cup from the empty place at the table): This is the cup of Elijah the Prophet, who did not see death, but was taken up to heaven alive in a mighty wind riding a fiery chariot. The Jewish people hoped that Elijah would come at Passover to announce the coming of the Messiah.

Before the birth of John the Baptizer, an angel of the Lord said, "And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Lk.1:17)

Later Jesus said about John, "...he is the Elijah who was to come." (Matt.11:14)

It was this same John who saw Jesus and announced, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

It was at this point in the Passover, during the "Cup of Redemption" that Jesus consecrated the wine, saying "this is my blood" and giving it to his apostles to drink (see 1Cor. 11:25). On Holy Thursday, we celebrate the Mass of our Lord's supper.

FATHER: As we drink from our cups for the third time, let us remember those Jews who are still seeking the Messiah Who has already come to them and Who waits longingly for them. (All drink.)

The Fourth Cup: The Cup of Praise (Hallel)

FATHER: Remember God's promise, "You will be my people and I will be your God" (Ex.6:7) Let's fill our cups for the fourth and last time, and give thanks to our great God. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

ALL: (R.) His love lasts forever.

Give thanks to the Lord, God of all creation. (R.)

Give thanks to Him who destroyed the demon gods of Egypt. (R.)

Give thanks to Him who destroys the works of Satan today. (R.)

Give thanks to Him who saved Israel from slavery in Egypt. (R.)

Give thanks to Him who saves us from slavery to sin. (R.)

Give thanks to God, our God, who chose us to be His people. (R.)

FATHER: Lift your cups and bless the Lord!

ALL: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. (All drink.)

FATHER: Our Passover celebration is now complete, just as God's plan for our salvation through Jesus, the true Passover Lamb is complete in the Eucharist. Let us prepare our hearts to celebrate the Mas of our Lord's Supper with both joy and sorrow: Joy for the great love and gift of our Savior, and sorrow for His passion.

ALL: Amen

Important Note:

Jesus did not drink the fourth cup of the Passover meal with his apostles. After sharing the third cup with them, which he consecrated as he gave them the Eucharist, Jesus said "I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the Kingdom of my Father." Then, after singing a hymn (the Hallel), they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Mat. 26: 29-30)

Some would say that Jesus waited to drink the fourth cup of the Passover meal from the cross: "...aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it to his mouth. (A hyssop branch was what the Israelites in Egypt used to mark their doorposts with the blood of the lamb – Ex 12:22) When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit." (Jn 19:28-30)

Jesus completed his Seder celebration on the cross as he himself is the Passover lamb of the New Covenant.

Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday recalls the institution of the Mass at the Last Supper, when Jesus celebrated the Jewish Passover Seder meal with his 12 apostles on the night before he died.

The first Passover meal took place on the night the Jews escaped from slavery in Egypt. God had instructed them to sacrifice, and then eat, a roasted lamb after first sprinkling its blood on their doorposts so that “the Lord will pass over that door and not let the destroyer come into that house” (Exodus 12:23). The destroyer was the final plague against their oppressors, which killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians and thus won the Hebrews their liberation. Since they departed so hastily from Egypt, there was no time for the bread to rise. In remembrance, Jews eat only unleavened bread or “matzah,” during the Passover.

The main Passover celebration is called a Seder. Literally, Seder means “order” referring to the order of the ceremony set up in ancient ritual books. Certain things are important to the Seder: special foods, the reading of the Haggadah, (the story of the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery that is recounted in the 12th chapter of Exodus), and the questioning by the youngest child as to the meaning of the Seder. In most Jewish communities, families celebrate the Seder meal on the second night of the eight-day feast of Passover.

When Jesus celebrated Passover at the Last Supper, he used the occasion to give himself to his disciples in the Eucharist as the new Passover lamb who saves us from the slavery of our sins and brings us into eternal life. When he broke the unleavened bread, he said “This is my Body.” This is why we use unleavened bread (wafers we call “hosts”) at Mass. When he took the wine, he said, “This is my blood.” Jesus asked the apostles to “do this in memory of me.” For he is the new unleavened bread come down from Heaven (John 6:30ff) to give life to the world. The Passover is integrally linked with the Mass, which we celebrate at Jesus’ command to “do this in memory of me.”

At the Last Supper, Jesus discussed the meaning of the Kingdom of God and washed the apostle’s feet, giving us an example of how we are to serve.

We participate in the Eucharist as a community. So important is this aspect of community that the Church prohibits Mass without a congregation on Holy Thursday.

To relate the gift of the Eucharist to Christ’s death, the church bells ring during the singing of the Gloria on Holy Thursday and then are silent until the Easter Vigil. The Holy Thursday Mass is usually celebrated in the evening. Following the Mass, the Eucharist is removed from the main altar and placed on a decorated side altar. It is reserved for the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday. The main altar is stripped and left bare, for Mass will not be celebrated again until the Easter Vigil.