

**“Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamatzot), because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.”** (Exodus 12:17)

Jewish people in Israel and around the world (as well as many non-Jewish followers of Yeshua) gather together in homes and synagogues with family and friends to celebrate the festival of Passover (Unleavened Bread) with a traditional ‘Seder’ ceremonial and festive meal.

Does one need to be Jewish to celebrate the Passover?

Definitely not! In fact, the apostle Paul encouraged the largely non-Jewish church of Corinth to ‘*keep the feast*’, according to the Scriptures:

**“Get rid of the old leaven (yeast), so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Messiah, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**

**Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread (matzah) of sincerity and truth.”**

(1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Believers in the Messiah Yeshua, whether Jewish or Gentile, are welcome to celebrate the Passover as part of our spiritual heritage. Israel’s deliverance from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt symbolically represents every Believer’s salvation.

We have each been rescued from the Kingdom of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of Light through the blood of the Passover Lamb of God, His own beloved Son, Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah), who was sacrificed for us.

**“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves”** (Colossians 1:13)

God brought into judgment those who stood in the way of His plan to deliver His people from bondage. He poured out His wrath upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the form of the Ten Plagues (Eser Hamakot).

Few Christians are actually aware of the significance of these plagues. Each one proved the supremacy of Yehovah, the one true God, over all the false ‘gods’ of Egypt. **“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn — animals —and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am YHVH יְהוָה .”** (Exodus 12:12)



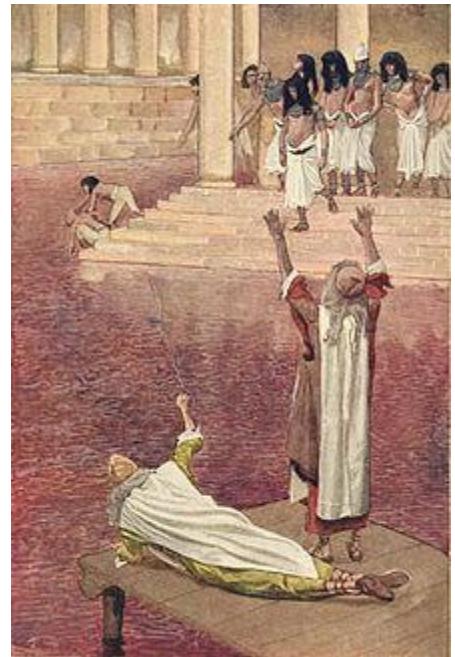
For example, in the first plague (**Dam (םְדָם)** - **blood**), when God commanded Moses to lift up his rod over the Nile River and all the water turned to blood, Adonai humiliated and defeated all the many gods of the Nile whom the Egyptians worshipped.

**“This is what יְהוָה says: “By this you will know that I am יְהוָה: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood.**

**The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink and thus the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.”**

( Exodus 7:17–18)

Likewise, each one of the plagues dramatically demonstrated the power of the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, over the demons of darkness. Interestingly, in the end time final battle, many of the same plagues that were poured out upon Egypt are repeated: blood, hail, darkness, painful sores and even frogs (עֲפָרָה) (see Revelation 16).



Water Is Changed into Blood, James Tissot

**“Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.”** (Revelation 16:13-14)

In the final and most terrible plague, God struck down all the firstborn of Egypt; but ‘passed over’ ‘(Pesach’ in Hebrew פֶּסַח ) the Israelites who, in faith and obedience, had applied the blood of the Lamb to the doorposts of their homes.

This is why we celebrate the Passover today; because God said, “**The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”** (Exodus 12:13)

This miraculous, divine rescue operation to deliver the ancient Israelites from oppression, bondage and slavery in Egypt is recounted each year at a special ritual meal called a ‘Seder’.

What takes place at a Passover Seder and what do the elements of a Seder represent? In Hebrew, the word ‘*seder*’ means ‘*order*'; therefore a Passover Seder is a special ceremonial meal that follows a specific order.



It is important first to note that a traditional Jewish Passover Seder may be observed quite differently than at a Messianic Jewish Believer's. Most Jewish people today follow prescribed Rabbinic readings in a booklet called a Hagaddah which basically minimizes or even omits mention of the blood of the Lamb; whereas this is the primary focus of a Messianic Jewish Passover Seder for Believers in Yeshua.

Each Seder usually starts with the lighting of festival candles and includes four cups of wine – one for each of the four promises of God in Exodus 6:6-7. In Israel, the Jewish people drink a fifth cup of wine to commemorate the fulfillment of God's final promise to bring us back into our own land.

**"And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am יהוה."** (Exodus 6:8)



Illuminated Haggadah (14th century)

A Passover Seder plate is arranged with symbolic foods which each have a special significance:

1. Maror (bitter herbs/ horseradish): This represents the bitterness of the slavery that the Israelites suffered in Egypt. For this, ground horseradish may be used.
2. Chazeret: Another representation of bitterness – the leaf of romaine lettuce is placed on the Seder plate. Through these two forms of bitter herbs, we may also remember the bitterness of all those oppressed even today because of the injustice of man (such as the sexual slavery of women in human trafficking) or through persecution for their faith in Yeshua.
3. Charoset: This brownish, sweet mixture of grated apples, walnuts, cinnamon and sweet wine or grape juice is meant to resemble the bricks used by the Israelite slaves to build the Egyptian storehouses.
4. Karpas : A green vegetable such as parsley is usually dipped into salt water to represent new life that comes in the Spring and also the tears of the Israelite slaves. Dipping the karpas in the salt water is a reminder to all of us that life sometimes comes with tears.
5. Zeroah: Roasted lamb or even the shank bone of a goat or other animal represents the Passover Sacrifice (korban Pesach) which was offered in the Temple and then eaten at the Passover meal.



6. Beitzah: A hard boiled and slightly scorched egg symbolizes the festival sacrifice (korban hagigah) as well as reminding us of the destruction of the Temple. Some Believers choose not to include the egg in their Seder as they consider it too close to the pagan custom of ‘Easter eggs’.

Another vital element of the Passover Seder is a stack of three matzot (unleavened bread). These are placed in a special fabric called a ‘matzah tash’, which separates the three matzot.

At some point during the Seder, the middle matzah is removed, broken in half, and then wrapped in a white, linen cloth to be hidden away until the children search for it and retrieve it after the festive meal.

Some believe that this obscure custom originates from the early Messianic community of followers of Yeshua. The three matzot represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The middle matzah (the Son) is broken, as

Yeshua’s body was broken on the cross. Then, just as His body was wrapped in burial linens and hidden in a tomb, so is this piece of matzah wrapped and hidden.



When the children find the matzah (called an afikoman), and bring it forth from its hiding place, this represents the resurrection of Yeshua. Halleluyah!

Passover is rich with symbolism and meaning that all point to Yeshua. Even the appearance of the Matzah itself reveals the Messiah. It is striped and pierced, just as Yeshua was ‘pierced for our transgressions and by His stripes we are healed’ (Isaiah 53:5)

The matzah is ‘unleavened’, since all leaven (yeast) must be removed from the home before beginning the Passover and for the entire week of its observance.

**“For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.”** (Exodus 12:15)

Why do we need to remove all leaven? It is because leaven represents sin. The unleavened bread, matzah, represents Yeshua who was completely without sin.

At every Passover Seder, one of the children ask four traditional questions called Mah Nishtana (Why is this night different than all other nights?)

But perhaps the most important question to ask is, “*How will Adonai pass over me personally to save me from His wrath and judgment?*”

The answer is the same as at the first Passover so long ago – by faithfully and out of obedience, applying the blood of the Lamb. But how may we do this today?

When we put our faith in Him, and the sacrifice He made to make atonement for our sins, then we have assurance that not only will be set free from slavery to sin and the Kingdom of darkness but will also enter into eternal life.

Yeshua said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*” (John 11:25-26).

When we believe in Yeshua, then we know that when God judges the world, as He did ancient Egypt, when He sees the blood, He will ‘pass over’ us. For it is by faith that we are saved.

Let us now celebrate our Redemption! Let us rejoice in Liberty! Let us keep the feast!

Shalom and Chag Sameach (Happy Holiday) blessings from Israel for a joyous and meaningful Passover (Pesach)!

Love in Yeshua,

Hannah Nesher

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