

The Feasts of Israel

Lesson Four - The Feast of Passover

TEXT: Lev 23:4-5 - These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons; In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover.

Just to summarize what we've learned so far about the feasts of Israel. There are eight feasts of Jehovah:

- 1. The weekly Sabbath feast (Leviticus 23:2-3)**
- 2. The yearly Passover feast (Leviticus 23:4-5)**
- 3. The yearly feast of unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:6-8)**
- 4. The yearly feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14)**
- 5. The yearly feast of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21)**
- 6. The yearly feast of trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25)**
- 7. The yearly feast of atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32)**
- 8. The yearly feast of tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-34)**

There are three specific three commands concerning the Feasts of Jehovah:

- 1. Speak to Israel concerning the feasts of Jehovah (Leviticus 23:2).**
- 2. Proclaim My feasts to be holy convocations.**
- 3. Proclaim the feasts in their proper seasons (Leviticus 23:4).**

Three of the feasts were yearly gatherings for all males:

- 1. The Feasts of the Passover, unleavened bread, and Firstfruits were observed in the same season at the same gathering (Exodus 12; Exodus 23:14-17).**
- 2. The Feast of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21; Exodus 23:16)**
- 3. The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44; Exodus 23:16; Exodus 34:18-22). Two other feasts that all males attended preceded this. By gathering fifteen days earlier they could attend all three that required a total of twenty-one days—the feast of trumpets, the great Day of Atonement, and feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:23-44; 2 Chron. 8:13).**

In addition to the feasts listed in the first three lessons there are eight other Feasts of the Jews:

- 1. A septennial (recurring every seven years) or sabbatical feast (Leviticus 25)**
- 2. The Feast of the new moon, the first crescent moon after its transition (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 2 Chron. 8:13; 2 Chron. 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33; Isaiah 1:13-14; Hosea 2:11; Col. 2:14-17)**

3. **The Feast of Purim, to celebrate the deliverance from Haman (Esther 9)**
4. **The Feast of Dedication, or the restoration of the temple, which was profaned by Antiochus Epiphanies (John 10:22). This was also called the Feast of Lights or more commonly known as Hannukah.**
5. **The Feast of Branches, to commemorate the taking of Jericho by Joshua. It is not mentioned in Scripture.**
6. **The Feast for the death of Nicanor (1 Macc. 7:48 of the Apocrypha)**
7. **The Feast for the Discovery of the Sacred Fire (2 Macc. 1:18)**
8. **The Feast of Carrying Wood to the Tabernacle, called Xylophory (Josephus, Wars of the Jews)**

The Feast of Passover <Hebrew: **pacach** (HSN-6452)> is the name of the yearly feast of Israel to commemorate their deliverance from the death angel in Egypt. It is an ancient feast, one that spans some 3500 years of human existence. Set in the time of Egypt's great pyramids, the Passover story is impassioned by fiery accounts of:

- **A death sentence for Jewish infants**
- **A baby floating in the river;**
- **Jewish slaves**
- **A burning bush**
- **Egyptian sorcerers;**
- **Tense confrontations with the Pharaoh**
- **Divine plagues**
- **A pursuing army**
- **The parting of the Red Sea**
- **The birth of a nation at the foot of a thundering wilderness mountain.**

The Ordinance of the Passover

Exod 12:43-51 - And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourns among you. Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. And it came to pass the

selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

There are 26 laws concerning Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Some group the two feasts together since Unleavened Bread begins one day after Passover: The following is a summary of those laws:

1. **On the tenth day of Nisan, the first month, take a lamb and keep it up until the fourteenth day (Exodus 12:3-6).**
2. **If one household is too small for a lamb, let two families share it so that there will be no waste (Exodus 12:4).**
3. **The lamb shall have no blemish (Exodus 12:5).**
4. **It shall be a male of the first year (Exodus 12:5).**
5. **Kill the lamb in the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan (Exodus 12:6)**
6. **Sprinkle the blood on doorposts and lintels of the door (Exodus 12:7,22-23).**
7. **Roast the whole lamb; eat with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8-9)**
8. **Do not eat it raw or boiled (Exodus 12:9).**
9. **Eat all of it; if any remains until morning burn it with fire (Exodus 12:10).**
10. **Eat in haste with loins girded and shoes on ready to travel (Exodus 12:11).**
11. **Eat in the night (Exodus 12:8,10,18).**
12. **The ordinance shall be a memorial forever (Exodus 12:14,17,24; Ezekiel 45:17).**
13. **Remove leaven from your houses; eat unleavened bread only (Exodus 12:15,19-20; Exodus 13:3-7).**
14. **Begin the feast of unleavened bread at the time of the Passover (Exodus 12:15-20).**
15. **Eat unleavened bread seven days (Exodus 12:15).**
16. **The first and seventh days shall be holy convocations with no work (Exodus 12:16).**
17. **Have no leaven whatsoever in your houses for the entire seven days (Exodus 12:18-19).**
18. **No stranger shall eat the Passover (Exodus 12:43).**
19. **No uncircumcised male shall eat of it (Exodus 12:44-48).**
20. **No foreigner or hired servant shall eat of it (Exodus 12:45).**
21. **It shall not be sent to others outside the house, but shall be eaten inside only (Exodus 12:46).**
22. **Break no bone of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:46; cp. John 19:33,36).**
23. **All the congregation of Israel shall keep the Passover (Exodus 12:47).**
24. **It is to be kept this month—Abib or Nisan (Exodus 13:5)—and yearly (Numbers 9:2-6).**

25. **People defiled at the Passover time could eat it one month later (Numbers 9:2-14).**
26. **Sacrificial lambs were to be killed only at the tabernacle (Deut. 16:5-6).**

Passover carries a powerful message for today. This holiday forms the primary background for understanding events that took place the night Jesus was betrayed, the symbolism of the Lord's Table, and the meaning of Messiah Jesus death. It is one of 18 memorials listed in scripture: <Psalm 135:13>

1. **God's name (Psalm 135:13; Exodus 3:15)**
2. **The Passover (Exodus 12:11-14)**
3. **Phylacteries—small boxes with Scripture portions worn on the forehead and arm (Exodus 13:9,16; Deut. 6:4-9; Deut. 11:18; Matthew 23:5)**
4. **War to exterminate Amalek (Exodus 17:14)**
5. **Ephod and stones (Exodus 28:12-29; Exodus 39:7)**
6. **Atonement money (Exodus 30:16)**
7. **Blowing of trumpets (Leviticus 23:24)**
8. **An offering (Numbers 5:15)**
9. **Punishment of Korah (Numbers 16:40)**
10. **Spoil of battle (Numbers 31:54)**
11. **The Sabbath to commemorate Israel's deliverance from slavery (Deut. 5:15)**
12. **Monument at Jordan (Joshua 4:7)**
13. **Feast of Purim (Esther 9:28)**
14. **The Lord (Hosea 12:5)**
15. **Crowns in the temple (Zech. 6:14)**
16. **Anointing of Jesus (Matthew 26:13)**
17. **The Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25)**
18. **Truth (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Peter 1:12-15)**

The Meaning of Passover

For more than 400 years the Jewish people had lived in Egypt. The time had come for God to bring them back to their land as He had promised.

Gen 46:3-4 - And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

Gen 50:24 - And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Exodus 12:40 - Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

In Exodus 11, God detailed, through His servant Moses, the tenth and final judgment plague that would befall the Egyptians and their false gods. At midnight, the Lord would pass through the land and kill the firstborn of each family and of all the cattle. With this final, climatic plague, God would dramatically free His people from the bondage of Egypt. In Exodus 12, God outlined explicit steps to be taken by those who trusted in Him so that they, unlike Pharaoh and the Egyptians, would not be struck down by the final plague. They were to select a year-old male lamb in its prime.

It was to be a perfect lamb without any flaw or defect. It was to be taken out from the flock on the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan and kept until the fourteenth day of the month. This would allow enough time for each family to observe the lamb and confirm that it was fit. This would also allow time for each family to become personally attached to their lamb so that would no longer be just a lamb, but their lamb.

Exod 12:1-5 - And the LORD spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:

When Abel had offered up the first lamb, that lamb was a lamb for a man. Abraham's lamb was a provisionary promise signifying that God would provide a Redeemer. This night on Passover, the lamb would become a lamb for a house. On the Day of Atonement later on, the lamb would become a lamb for a nation. And when the Lord Jesus, Yeshua the Messiah, would be revealed John the Baptist would proclaim, "Behold, the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." Jesus would be the lamb for the entire world.

That lamb was a type of Christ. On this first Passover night the Jewish nation would not understand the powerful message that was going to be proclaimed throughout generations to come that the Lord Jesus was slain as a lamb going to slaughter and that man's sins were taken away. They were not covered like the blood of the lambs did under the Old Covenant, but they were TAKEN AWAY! Glory to God!!

On the evening of the fourteenth, as the warm afternoon sun was setting the lambs were to be publicly killed by the “whole assembly.” All the people were to be responsible for the death of the lambs. Yet, in contrast, each family was to individually apply the blood of their lamb to the doorposts of their own home as a visible sign of their faith in the Lord.

Exodus 12:13 - And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

At that moment, the innocent lamb became their substitute making it possible for the Lord’s judgment to “pass over” them. It would be called a “night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt.” (Ex. 12:42)

The Typology of The Passover Lamb and Jesus Christ, The Lamb of God

John 1:29- Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Jesus Christ is the “Lamb of God.” Down through the centuries “the Lamb of God” has been one of the most cherished symbols of Jesus Christ held by believers. There are four reasons for this.

The Lamb is a picture of Christ our Passover who was sacrificed for us.

“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

Historically, the Passover refers back to the time when God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 11:1f). God had pronounced judgment, the taking of the firstborn, upon the people of Egypt for their injustices. As He prepared to execute the final judgment, the faithful, those who believed God, were instructed to slay a pure lamb and sprinkle its blood over the doorposts of their homes. The blood of the innocent lamb would then serve as a sign that the coming judgment had already been carried out. When seeing the blood, God would pass over that house. Those who believed God applied the blood to their homes and were saved, but those who did not believe did not apply the blood to their homes and their firstborn were destroyed.

Symbolically, the Passover pictured the coming of Jesus Christ as the Savior. The lamb without blemish pictured His sinless life (cp. John 1:29), and the blood sprinkled on the door posts pictured His blood shed for the believer. It was a sign that the life and blood of the innocent lamb had been substituted for the firstborn. The eating of the lamb pictured the need for spiritual nourishment gained by feeding on Christ, the Bread of Life. The unleavened bread (bread without yeast) pictured the need for putting evil out of one’s life and household. The major point to note is this: it was the blood of the lamb that saved the people. The lamb was

sacrificed; that is, its blood was shed as a substitute for the people. The lamb symbolized Christ our Passover who was sacrificed for us. If we believe and apply His blood to our hearts and homes, He saves us. If we do not believe and do not apply the blood to our hearts and homes, we are destroyed. It is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us; it is His blood that saves us.

The Lamb is a picture of the precious blood of Christ that redeems us.

“Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things.... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Historically, two lambs were sacrificed “day by day continually...the one...in the morning; and the other...at even” (Exodus 29:38-39). The sacrifice of the two lambs, the shedding of their precious blood, became a substitute for the people. The people knew their sins had separated them from God and that their sins had to be removed before they could be reconciled to God. Thus, symbolically, the sins of the people were removed from the people and placed upon the two animals. The animals, without blemish and without spot, had the sins of the people placed upon them; and symbolically, they bore the judgment of sin, which was death. They were sacrificed for sin, and by their death; they symbolically set the people free by redeeming them from their sins. (But note a critical point. It was not the deed that caused God to remove the sins, but the faith of the person in God’s Word that He would remove the sins.) This, of course, is a picture of Christ. (Cp. Isaiah 53:6-7; Jeremiah 11:19; Acts 8:32; 1 Cor. 5:7; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:22-24; Rev. 5:6; Rev. 6:1; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 14:1; Rev. 15:3; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:9; Rev. 21:22.) Jesus Christ is...

- **The perfect Lamb of God, without sin (blemish or spot).**
- **The One upon whom the sins of the people were placed.**
- **The One who bore the judgment for sin, which was death.**
- **The One who was sacrificed for sin.**
- **The One whose death sets people free by redeeming them.**
- **The One whose blood is counted precious both by God and believers**
- **It should be noted that Christ willingly offered Himself as the sacrificial Lamb, as our substitute and sin-bearer; and God willingly accepted the offering and sacrifice of His Son for us (John 10:17-18).**

God is satisfied with the settlement for sin that Christ made. If any person really believes the blood of Christ to be precious—really believes that the blood of Christ covers his sins—God will take that person’s belief and count it as righteousness. God counts that person righteous. The “Lamb of God” is not of men, but of God. The idea is that the Lamb belonged to God; that is, God gave, supplied, and provided the Lamb for sacrifice. (Cp. Genesis 22:8 where God provided the lamb for Abraham as a substitute for Isaac.) This glorious truth speaks volumes on...

- **The unbelievable love of God for man (John 3:16; Romans 5:1).**
- **The great sacrifice and humiliation Christ underwent for man (Phil. 2:6-8; 1 Peter 2:24).**
- **The forgiveness of sins and salvation which came from God's grace and not from man's resources and works (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:4-7).**
- **The deity of Christ, His being of God.**
- **The "Lamb of God" takes away the sin of the world. The phrase "takes away" (airon) means to lift away, to carry off. It means to bear in behalf of one, as one's substitute. Jesus Christ was the sacrificial Lamb of God who bore our sins. He lifted our sins off of us and bore and carried them away.**

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

The word "sin" (harmartian) is singular, not plural. All the sins of the world are taken and placed into one package. The whole package of sin—all the sin of every man who has ever lived—was laid upon and borne by Christ.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

The world is looked at as a whole. Christ bore the sins of the whole world, not the sins of just some men. No matter the depth and ugliness of a man's sin, Christ bore the sins of the whole world. This is what Passover speaks of. It speaks of Redemption!!!

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2)

The Time of Passover

Passover is a one-day feast that is immediately followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Both feasts today are usually blurred together as a single entity and called "Passover." God ordained that Passover be observed each year on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month, Nisan (April-March), the day that God delivered His people from Egypt (Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:5; Numbers 9:3; 28:16). His deliverance was so might and awesome that Israel's religious

calendar was forever altered. In commemoration of this miraculous deliverance, the month of Nisan (known as Abib before the Babylonian captivity), became the first month of the Hebrew religious year from that time forward.

The Beginning of Months

The month Abib (Exodus 13:4), later called Nisan, corresponded somewhat with April (Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7). Israel's year previously began with Tishri, which is now the seventh month (corresponding with September). Jews still consider Abib or Nisan as the beginning of their sacred year and Tishri as the beginning of the civil year. The fifteenth day of Abib became the ruling date of all events of the year.

The Jewish Calendar Compared to Ours:

1.	Abib (Nisan)	March-April
2.	Iyyar (Zif)	April-May
3.	Sivan	May-June
4.	Tammuz	June-July
5.	Ab	July-August
6.	Elul	August-September
7.	Tishri (Tisri)	September-October
8.	Marchesvan (Bul)	October-November
9.	Chisleu	November- December
10.	Tebeth	December-January
11.	Sebat	January-February
12.	Adar	February-March

To maintain the relation of lunar months to the solar year, it was periodically necessary to add a thirteenth month, called Second Adar. In Scripture, Jewish months are generally identified by number instead of names:

- **The first month (31 times); Abib (Exodus 13:4; Exodus 23:15; Exodus 34:18; Deut. 16:1); Nisan (Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7)**
- **The second month (14 times); Zif (1 Kings 6:1,37)**
- **The third month (6 times); Sivan (Esther 8:9)**
- **The fourth month (6 times)**
- **The fifth month (11 times)**
- **The sixth month (4 times); Elul (Neh. 6:15)**
- **The seventh month (27 times)**
- **The eighth month (5 times); Bul (1 Kings 6:38)**

- **The ninth month (7 times); Chisleu (Neh. 1:1; Zech. 7:1)**
- **The tenth month (11 times); Tebeth (Esther 2:16)**
- **The eleventh month (3 times); Sebat (Zech. 1:7)**
- **The twelfth month (8 times); Adar (Ezra 6:15; Esther 3:7,13; Esther 8:12; Esther 9:1,15,17,19,21)**

Laws regarding days, weeks, months, years, Sabbaths, new moons, feasts, and various rituals have been entirely done away with in the New Testament. No particular month is mentioned in the New Testament, compared to 158 times in the Old Testament. Paul condemns observing days, months, times, and years, and respecting holydays, new moons, or Sabbath days as essential to salvation (Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:9-10; Col. 2:14-17).

However, observing Passover in honor of Messiah is a sign we have identified ourselves with Messiah Jesus. By all Biblical accounts, the lamb was the core requisite for Passover (Ex. 12; 34:25; Deut. 16:1-7). It was the centerpiece of all that was accomplished. If there were no lamb, there would be no deliverance. So central was the lamb to Passover observance that the term “the Passover” came to be used interchangeably of the lamb as well as the holiday. One could not exist without the other. The lamb embodied the holiday, and without it, the holiday was meaningless. In all, God required three symbolic foods to be eaten that Passover night –

- **The lamb**
- **The Matzah (unleavened bread)**
- **Bitter herbs.**

Exod 12:8 - And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

The sacrifice was to be young lamb, depicting innocence. It was to be roasted with fire portraying the judgment that would befall it instead of the firstborn. Matzah (unleavened bread) was to be eaten symbolizing the purity of the sacrifice since leaven, with its souring characteristic, was often a symbol of sin. Bitter herbs were to be eaten as a reminder of the suffering of the lamb. There was only ONE Passover when the Lord passed through the land in judgment. Every observance since then has been a memorial commemorating that occasion.

Exodus 13:3 - And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

Passover holds great distinction among the religious feasts of the world. Passover is the oldest continuously observed feast in existence today, celebrated for some 3,500 years.

- **Passover was celebrated in the Sinai wilderness one year after Israel left Egypt <Num 9:1-14>**
- **Passover was celebrated when the Jewish people came into the land of Israel (Josh. 5:10-12)**
- **Passover was celebrated in the days of King Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30)**
- **Passover was celebrated in the days of King Josiah (2 Kings 23:21-23)**
- **Passover was celebrated after the return from Babylonian captivity (Ezra 6:19-20);**
- **Passover was celebrated extensively in the days of Jesus (John 11:55).**

Even today, more Jewish people keep Passover than any of the other Jewish holy days. It is a strong, cohesive force within the fabric of Jewish culture and community. The observance of Passover was so important that God graciously gave an alternate date for those who were unable to observe Passover on Nisan 14. Those who had become defiled by touching a dead body or were away on a long journey could celebrate Passover 30 days later on the fourteenth of the second month (Num. 9:1-14; cf. 2 Chr. 30:2, 15). None of the other divinely appointed feasts had this accommodation.

The Passover Seder

God commanded that Passover be observed as a memorial forever and declared it was to be kept by a service.

Exodus 12:25 - And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

Exodus 12:14 - And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.

This service was to incorporate the lamb, Matzah and bitter herbs and to raise questions in the minds of children so that the Exodus story could be rehearsed from generation to generation.

Exodus 12:26-27 - And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of

**Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.
And the people bowed the head and worshipped.**

Several centuries before Christ, a somewhat traditionalized Passover service began to emerge. This ritual Passover service was called the Seder from the Hebrew meaning word meaning “order.” It prescribed the traditional order of the Scripture readings, prayers, symbolic foods, and songs in the Passover service. The basic order of the Passover Seder today remains much as it was 2,000 years ago even though the service continued to be embellished with more songs and traditions up through the Middle Ages. The Seder is symbolic of Christ in all its elements.

Before the arrival of Passover, painstaking preparation takes place in the Jewish home to rid it of all leavened bread and related products. Houses are scrubbed, pockets are turned inside out and laundered, cooking utensils are scalded, and everyday dinnerware and flatware are replaced with the finest Passover china, silver and crystal. The Passover service itself is usually quite lengthy as the Passover story unfolds through the many prayers, songs, and narrative readings in the Haggadah. The Seder sometimes lasts until midnight or even the early hours of the morning before tired family members wander off to bed.

As the family is seated, special seating arrangements are observed. The leader sits at his right side in order to fulfill a special role later in the Seder service. To the left of the leader, the guest of honor is seated, or sometimes the place setting is reserved for the prophet Elijah. The mother of the house ushers in the holiday by lighting the Passover candles. She then covers her eyes with her hands and recites a Hebrew blessing over the candles thanking God for the special occasion: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has set us apart by His Word, and in whose Name we light the festival lights.”

The First Cup

The Lord used four expressions to describe His promised deliverance from Egypt:

- **I will bring you out**
- **I will rescue you from their bondage**
- **I will redeem you**
- **I will take you as My people**

Since wine is often a symbol of joy of harvest, four cups of wine are taken during the Passover service to reflect the fourfold joy of the Lord’s redemption. To begin the service, the father pours the first cup of wine and asks everyone to rise from the table. The father then lifts his cup toward heaven and recites the Kiddush or “prayer of sanctification” to set the day apart to God:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who created the fruit of the vine. Blessed Art Thou, O Lord our God, Who hast chosen us for Thy service from among the nations...Blessed art Thou, our God, King of the universe, Who hast kept us in life, Who hast preserved us, and hast enabled us to reach this season.

It was the Messiah, as the leader of the Seder service observed in the Upper Room, who said the Kiddush. "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks." (Luke 22:17)

The Washing of the Hands

The second ceremony of the Seder is known as the "washing of the hands." One of the family members brings a pitcher of water, bowl, and towel to each person at the table to wash his hands. The ceremony is a symbolic act of purification as they prepare to handle the food. It was probably this ceremony in the Seder that the Messiah used to teach His disciples an object lesson:

John 13:4-5 - He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

His object lesson demonstrated that He was about to become the suffering servant of the Lord, and as such, He would be the One to cleanse them.

The Green Vegetable

After the hands are washed, the Karpas (green vegetable) is dipped into the salt water and eaten. The green vegetable is a reminder that Passover occurs in the springtime. The salt water is a reminder of the tears and pain and suffering shed by the Jewish people in slavery. Today, it holds even greater meaning, as it is a reminder of the Holocaust of 1939-1945 and the bitterness of the death and carnage experienced by the Jews.

The Middle Matzah

Next, the leader removes the middle Matzah from the linen bag to break it in half. Half is replaced, and half is carefully wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden away in the house while the children cover their eyes. It reappears later in the service to illustrate a very important truth.

The Four Questions

At this point the youngest child is called on to recite his diligently rehearsed part. The child asks the traditional Passover questions to fulfill Exodus 12:26:

Exodus 12:26-27 - And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened, but on this night, only unleavened bread? On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night, only bitter herbs? On all other nights, we do not dip even once, but on this night we dip twice? On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night, we eat reclining?

Often the youngest will recline upon the leader. This was the context of the apostle John reclining upon Jesus at their Passover supper. John recorded:

John 13:23 - Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

This would indicate that John sat to the right of the Savior and was the youngest at the meal, a position consistent with early Church tradition that John was the youngest apostle. John would have had the honor of asking the questions that night. And it was John who asked the Lord Jesus, "Who is it that will betray you?"

The Second Cup

Next, the second cup of wine is poured and in response to the four questions, a lengthy narrative recounting the Passover story begins. The story relates the whole panorama of the beginnings of the nation: the calling of Abraham in Ur; God's promises to the patriarchs; the story of Joseph and his brothers; the enslavement of the Jewish nation; the deliverance brought at the hand of Moses; and the giving of the Law at Sinai.

As the ten plagues are described, a tiny bit of wine is poured out for each plague. This expresses sorrows felt for the suffering of the Egyptians. As the Passover story unfolds, the Seder tray and its symbolic elements are carefully explained and woven into the telling of the Passover story.

Before the second cup of wine is taken, the first half of the praise psalms, known in Judaism as the Hallel (Psalms 113-118), is recited responsively. Hallel is a Hebrew word for praise. This word has made its way into many languages in the form of hallelujah, meaning, "Praise Jehovah." According to the Talmud,

which records the ancient rabbinic commentary on Jewish practice, the Levites would chant this group of psalms while the Passover lambs for each family were being sacrificed.

The Dipping of the Matzah

In preparation for the meal, everyone present is washing his hands a second time for ceremonial cleansing. Then the upper Matzah and the remainder of the middle Matzah are broken into pieces and distributed to everyone. Each person must eat a piece of Matzah dipped in the horseradish and haroset (apple mixture). This is a reminder of the sweetness of God's redemption in the midst of their bitter slavery. Each person then puts a filling of horseradish between two pieces of the Matzah. This is called the "Hallel Sandwich." It is named in honor of the brilliant and revered first-century rabbi who taught that enough of the bitter herb should be taken to bring tears to the eyes. In this way each participant can personally identify with his forefathers who were slaves in Egypt.

It was this ritual which gave rise to another important event in the Last Supper. The Messiah foretold that one of the disciples would betray Him. Peter motioned to John who was reclining against Jesus to inquire of whom this was spoken. Jesus replied that it would be the one to whom He gave a dipped sop (broken piece of Matzah). Jesus dipped the Matzah and gave it to Judas Iscariot. The Scripture is not specific as to the seating arrangement. It could be that Judas was sitting to the left of the Lord in the seat of honor and quite naturally would have received the Matzah first according to tradition. It could also be that Jesus reached across the circle to begin with Judas first. However, if tradition was kept, everyone received a dipped piece of Matzah that night. Perhaps this is why the disciples were still not clear as to who would be the betrayer. In either case, Judas left the service and went out to finalize the betrayal. This ceremony occurred before the meal, and Judas was not present later when Jesus instituted Communion after the dinner.

Jesus was broken (He died), wrapped and hidden away (buried), and brought back at the third cup of wine (resurrected the third day). The three matzahs represent the Godhead- the Father and the Holy Ghost.

The Dinner

Next, the dinner is served. In the day of Jesus, it would have consisted of roasted lamb, served with bitter herbs and Matzah. Today, however, the meal is far more varied and sumptuous. A traditional Passover meal may include delicious Jewish dishes of gefilte fish, Matzah ball soup, glazed chicken, Matzah nut stuffing, potato kugel, honeyed carrots, stewed fruit, and sponge cake. In every way it is a meal fit for a King☺

The Afikomen

After the meal, the children are sent out to find the broken half-Matzah that was wrapped and hidden away. It is known as the afikomen. The children search high and low with great excitement for they know that the one who finds it will receive a reward. From a remote corner of the house, shouts of delight announce that the desired treasure has been discovered. Rabbinic law requires a small piece of the afikomen be broken off and eaten by everyone present at the service as a reminder of the Passover lamb.

The Third Cup

Next in the ceremony, the third cup of wine, called The Cup of Redemption, is poured and sipped. It was here in the Passover Seder that the Messiah instituted the Lord's Table. Luke reveals that it was the "cup after supper" the third cup or Cup of Redemption that Jesus chose to be a reminder of His work on the cross.

Passover is closely associated with the fervent hope for the coming of the Messiah. After the third cup, a child is sent to the front door to hopefully welcome in the prophet Elijah. It is hoped that the prophet will step through the doorway, drink his cup of wine, and announce the coming of the Messiah. This tradition is actually rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, for Malachi prophesied, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Mal. 4:5) Many believe Elijah will be one of the two messianic witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11 since one of them will perform miracles of Elijah. Although the scriptures teach that Elijah will return in the future, it does not name the two witnesses.

The Fourth Cup

The fourth cup of wine, called the Cup of Acceptance, or Praise, is poured and taken. It was this cup that the Messiah said He would not drink until He drank it with the disciples in the Kingdom. He knew that the hour of His acceptance by His Jewish nation was yet future, and therefore His joy would be full until then.

Matt 26:29 - But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

At the conclusion of the service, a hymn is usually sung or recited. This was also the tradition in the day of Jesus. Matthew states, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out." (Matthew 26:30). Perhaps since Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, he knew that they would know the name of the hymn since by tradition, every Seder ends with the latter half of the Hallel (Ps. 115-118).

How ironic that just hours before Jesus was betrayed and went to the cross, He sang the prophetic words of Psalm 118:

Ps 118:22-26 - The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

The Messiah sang these words just hours before He fulfilled them in becoming the stone that was rejected by the religious leaders. How tragic is it that the Jewish nation did not realize that the truth of this Psalm stood before them in the form of Jesus Christ. The Messiah would first be rejected and suffer before He would reign on David's throne. How doubly tragic, sine Psalm 118 was generally viewed as messianic and was even sung to Jesus proclaiming Him the Messiah at His so-called triumphal entry. Matthew recorded words of similar content in chapter 21 of his book:

Matt 21:9 - And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

The Passover Table

There are 15 elements of the Passover table which all point to Christ and the Jewish experience. Let's look at each one:

A Pillow – is placed near the left arm of the leader on which to recline during the Seder. The custom of reclining while eating is of ancient Persian origin. It symbolizes freedom, since slaves were never permitted to recline in leisure at a meal.

Salt Water – symbolizes the Jewish tears shed during Egyptian bondage and God's miraculous parting of the Red Sea

The Haggadah – which means in the Hebrew, “the telling.” It's so named from the Lord's command to “tell your son”. (Ex. 13:8). It is the book which relates the Passover story through readings, songs, and prayers in the traditional prescribed order

The Kippa – or Yarmulke is the small head covering worn by Jewish males to show reverence for God. There is no command for such a practice in scripture, but it arose by tradition in post-Biblical times

Haroset – is a sweet mixture of finely chopped apple, nuts, cinnamon, and wine made to resemble the red-brown clay and mortar used by Israel in making the bricks of Pharaoh's pyramids. Its sweetness is a reminder of the sweetness of God's redemption of slavery

The Seder Tray – is a tray or platter that usually has six circular indentations so that the symbolic Passover foods may be individualized and displayed. It is the central item on the modern Passover table.

Candles – are lit at sunset and a prayer pronounced over them by the mother of the house to begin the Passover service. The candles, with their bright, warm glow, symbolized the solemnity of the occasion and set Passover apart as a special day

Three Matzahs – (unleavened bread) are placed on the Passover table with one in each pocket of the embroidered matzah tash (linen bag). Some rabbinic authorities suggest that the three matzahs represent the three groups of Jewish people; the priests, the Levites, and the Israelites. However, there is no biblical basis for this explanation.

Wine – is a symbol of joy. Rabbinic law commands that four cups of wine be taken during the Seder to symbolize the four-fold expressions of the Lord's promised deliverance. According to rabbinic law, the wine must be red.

Elijah's Cup – is the extra cup of wine poured in hopes that the prophet Elijah might come and announce the arrival of the Messiah. Rabbinic tradition holds that the Messiah will come during Passover, the season of redemption, to bring about the final redemption from dispersion. However, according to Malachi 4:5, Elijah must appear first

Karpas – usually parsley, bitter lettuce, or watercress, is considered a bitter herb. Its green color is a reminder of springtime during which Passover occurs and also of the hyssops plant used to apply the blood to the doorposts

Maror – or the bitter herbs is usually ground horseradish, is a mandatory item for Passover. It is a reminder of the bitterness that the Israelites suffered as slaves in Egypt.

The Shankbone – of a lamb is a stark reminder of the Passover lamb sacrificed each year in the days of the Temple. The sacrificial system ceased with the Roman destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70

The Roasted Egg – in some traditions represents the required peace offering in the Temple for the second day of Passover

Hazeret – is a whole bitter herb, horseradish or onion. It is in addition to the Maror since the biblical command in Numbers 9 is to eat the meal with bitter herbs (Plural)

Ten Passover's of Scripture

Exodus 12:23 - [For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons forever. And it shall come to pass, when

ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep his service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses] The 23rd prophecy in Exodus (Exodus 12:23-27, fulfilled).

Other Passovers In Scripture:

- **The original Passover (Exodus 12:21-28)**
- **The Passover in the wilderness (Numbers 9:5)**
- **The first Passover in Canaan (Joshua 5:10)**
- **The Passover under Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:13-15)**
- **The Passover under Josiah (2 Kings 23:21; 2 Chron. 35)**
- **The Passover under Zerubbabel (Ezra 6:19)**
- **The Passover that Jesus attended as a boy (Luke 2:41)**
- **The first Passover mentioned during Jesus' ministry (John 2:13)**
- **The second Passover during Jesus' ministry (John 6:4)**
- **The last Passover during Jesus' ministry (Matthew 26:17)**