



Christ our Passover



For Bible believing Christians Easter has special significance. The Jewish Passover (Pesach) was completely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth – Israel’s promised Messiah and King. He is the “Passover” par excellence who became their substitutionary sacrifice on the Cross.

To appreciate more fully the significance of God’s good news in Jesus’ unique death, burial and resurrection, believers should reflect more deeply on the Feast of Passover.

Passover is firmly rooted in Judaism. The biblical account is recorded in the Tenach (the “Old Testament” as Christians designate it), in Exodus 12:

“... on the tenth of this month (Abib [13:4], called “Nisan” after the Babylonian Exile [Neh. 2:1]), everyman shall take for himself a lamb, ... a lamb for a household.

“... your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year ...

“... on the fourteenth day of the same month, the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it”.

“... So you shall eat (the roast lamb) in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.

“... and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. (Exodus 12: 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, and 14).

Thus began one of the three major Jewish festivals that later required the Jewish people to make the physical pilgrimage “up to Jerusalem” and the Temple: Passover (Pesach), Shavuot (First fruits) and Sukkot (Tabernacles)

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Historically, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was observed from 15th-21st Nisan (7 days), but today the Jews of the Diaspora observe it for eight days.

Ritual nullification takes place. That is, all *hametz* (food products containing leaven) have to be removed from the home. Any leaven found – usually some strategically placed crumbs here and there – is swept into a wooden spoon with a feather. Jewish folk see the removing of the *hametz* as something they can do for themselves, i.e., one can remove “sin” (of which leaven speaks) from the innermost corners of one’s self. Such a view is countered by Psalm 49:7-8 as shall be presented shortly. Appropriate prayers are said to finish the process.

Before the destruction of the Second Temple (A.D. 70), the sacrificial lambs were killed, staked up and flayed, then taken home to be roasted. As these sacrifices were being made, the Levites sang for each family group a collection of Psalms called the Hallel (Ps. 113-118).

Now that there is no physical temple, the “sacrificial lamb” is symbolized by a roast shank bone of a lamb. It adorns the Seder Plate, along with other elements rich and beautiful in spiritual meaning.

The **seder plate** is a large plate with sections divided for various objects relating to the exodus.

Jewish Passover Today

To observe all that God has commanded each year at the festival of Passover, a special meal called a **seder** (Hebrew, *order*) is held amongst Jewish communities.

The Passover **seder** is a prescribed order for the meal with prayer, food and drink. Each person is to tell the story of Passover as if he himself had been redeemed. In particular, time is taken to recount to the children the significance of the feast for the nation of Israel.

The **roasted shank bone of a lamb** (Hebrew, **zeroah**) is placed on the seder plate to remind all present of the sacrifice of the lamb at the temple. Since A.D. 70 there has been no physical sacrifice of a lamb.

Four seder cups are filled with red wine or grape juice. Being red in colour, this recalled the blood of the Passover lamb. The cups are: *the Cup of Sanctification, the Cup of Praise, the Cup of Redemption and the Cup of Acceptance.*

A blessing is pronounced, each in turn as the **seder meal** progresses, to represent the four ways in which God described Israel’s redemption in Exodus 6:6-7. God said He would:

- “bring them out from under (their) burdens”,
- “rid (them) out of (their) bondage”,
- “redeem (them) with an outstretched arm” and
- “(would take them to Himself) for (His) people”.

Elijah’s Cup takes a prominent position on the table, along with a place set for

him to attend. Malachi 4:5 prophesied that God would send Elijah before the Day of the Lord would come.

Parsley or celery (Hebrew, **karpas**, any green herb, not bitter) reminds the Jews of the hyssop their forefathers used to apply the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:22). It is also a reminder of Spring. Dipping the **karpas** into a small bowl of **salt water** symbolizes the tears of the Jewish people shed while in bondage.

Charoset (Hebrew, *mortar*) is a mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon, honey and wine mixed into a sweet paste. It represents the bricks and mortar the Israelites used while slaves in Egypt.

Bitter herbs, lettuce or horse radish (Hebrew, **maror**) symbolizes the bitter lives and slavery of the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 1:14).

The hard boiled or roasted egg (Hebrew, **baytzah**) is a symbol of new life just as Passover is celebrated in the Spring of the year as new life emerges from the long winter months. Despite any hardship, life continues with God's eternal blessings. The egg is also associated with mourning and at the **seder** is a reminder of the destruction of the Second Temple.

Three **matzos** (Hebrew, *unleavened bread*) – something like large cracker biscuits – are placed in a special linen pouch (Hebrew, **matzahtash**) with three compartments. The three divisions have two basic understandings: first, the two loaves of bread the Israelites use on “Shabbat” and “Yom Tov”, plus an additional one (in the *middle* compartment!) for “The Bread of Affliction”. Others see the three compartments as representing the three divisions of the Israelite people: Cohens, Levites and Israelites.

Procedure

With all the elements in place, and the family gathered (reclining or seated), the lady of the house greets the holiday with a welcome and blessing over the candles as she lights them.

The first cup of wine (the **kiddush**) is blessed and drunk, followed by a ritual hand washing ceremony depicting cleanliness.

Parsley is then dipped into salt water and eaten by all participants. Then the middle **motzah** is broken – one half is returned to the **matzahtash** pouch, the other piece

folded in linen cloth and hidden, to be hunted later by the children.

This special piece of matzo is called the **afikomen**, the only Greek term used in the whole **seder**, meaning “I came/he came”. (Was this added by Christians in the first century of the Common Era/A.D.? Possibly so, according to some biblical scholars).

The story of the Exodus is then recounted, introduced by the youngest child who poses the question: “Why is this night different from all the other nights of the year?”

The answers to this and four further questions create the context for the father to recount the Passover from the book of Exodus.

After the telling of the Exodus story, two Hallel Psalms are read (Ps. 113-114), followed by the blessing and drinking of the second Cup. Then the blessing is pronounced on the upper and bottom **matzos**, they are broken and given out for all to eat immediately following the eating of the bitter herbs,

Next a sandwich is formed from the bitter herbs (**charoset**) and two pieces of the bottom matzo. This “Hillel sandwich” is then eaten, followed by the sumptuous main course meal.

When this is over, the children search for the **afikomen**. The successful child joyously brings the “found treasure” back to the father of the house and is rewarded with a monetary gift. The **afikomen** is then broken and given to everyone to eat. No other food is consumed after this aspect has been completed.

Further prayers and thanksgiving follow, plus the blessing in drinking of the Third Cup of wine. A household family member is then asked to go to the front door and open it to see if Elijah the prophet is coming. The remaining Hallel Psalms (115-118) are then read, followed by the blessing and drinking of the Fourth Cup. This was the one Jesus said He would not drink until the Kingdom arrived (Mt. 26:29). Significantly, this is the Cup of *Acceptance!*

Additional festival songs are sung and, looking forward to the coming messianic age, they all end the joyous night of celebration with their united cry:

“Next year in Jerusalem!”

So, on Saturday, 19th April, 2008 (14th Nisan, 5768 in the Jewish calendar),

Jewish families around the world will again sit down around their specially prepared seder table to celebrate “their” redemption from slavery and oppression – exemplified historically in their Egyptian bondage. It is the night of Passover.

Christ in the Passover

The festival of Passover foreshadows our redemption in Jesus Christ in the most insightful and beautiful detail possible. Couple this with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and one sees immediately the holy standard of living to which God has called His people.

Peter reflected this spiritual combination when he wrote:

“But as He who called you is holy, you be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ ... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ ...” (1 Pet. 1: 15-16, 17-20).

Israel was given the feast of Passover by Moses when they were slaves in Egypt (Ex. 12:1-13:10). Deliverance from bondage was only possible through the “blood of the lamb” (Ex. 12:13). The event happened once, but the holiday celebration was established for the purpose of remembering what God did in taking His people out from slavery to freedom (Dt. 6:23; 16:1, 3).

Prophetically speaking, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread relate to both the First and Second Advents of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

He celebrated the feast on numerous occasions, the most notable being the one He celebrated with His disciples on the night of His betrayal. His “Last Supper” is recorded in John 13.

Later in the meal, Jesus said that one of His disciples would betray Him. The person committing this dastardly deed would be the one who “dipped the sop” – a probable reference to the “Hillel sandwich” mentioned above. This was prophesied in Ps. 41:9:

“Yes, my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against me”.

During this last Passover meal, Jesus partook of the unleavened bread and drank the Passover cups – at least the first three, we are told (Lk. 22:17-20; cf. Mt.26:29). It is of great significance that

He applied two of the main elements of the seder – the unleavened bread and one of the cups – to Himself! Paul later wrote:

“When He had given thanks, He broke the (unleavened) bread, and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is for you: do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor.11:24). In effect, Jesus was saying that His life contained no evil or sin – as symbolized by leaven.

Then He took the cup saying:

“This is the cup of the new covenant written in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:25; cf. Mt. 26-29). This was the Third Cup in the seder (the Cup of Redemption) and corresponds with the third promise of Exodus 6:6 – “I will redeem you”.

Spiritual redemption from sin was effected by Jesus’ death for sin on the Cross (Eph. 1:7), just as physical redemption from slavery was effected by the Passover lamb for the Israelites in Egypt hundreds of years before (Ex. 6:6; cf. 15:13). That’s why Christians “remember Him” in the “breaking of the bread” and “the drinking of the cup” at regular communion services (Cf. Acts. 2:42-47; 20:7: 1 Cor. 11:26).

In applying the bread and the cup to His person and ministry, Jesus clearly identified that He fulfilled the Jewish Passover festival, for it foreshadowed Him and what He would do to deal with the sin problem. Forgiveness only comes through His own shed blood as a redeeming sacrifice to atone for man’s sin (Is. 53:6-8; Rom. 3:23-26).

But there’s more in this precious foreshadowing:

- The bitter herbs spoke of the bitterness of physical slavery for Israel. But the Psalmist said that, ultimately, bondage is due to “(rebellious) against the words of God”, and the “(despising of) the counsel of the Most High” (Ps. 107:10-11). Man is a slave to sin (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 17:9; Ps. 51:3-4), for there is “no one that does good ...” (Ps. 14:2-3), “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and “wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23; cf. Ezek. 18:20). Since all men are “dead in their sins” (Eph. 2:1), **it is impossible for anyone to redeem himself or anyone else. The Bible is clear: a sinner cannot pay the spiritual debt of another sinner:**

“None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him (for the redemption of

their soul is precious) – Ps., 49:7-8.

Only a sinless Person could do that and that was Jesus, symbolized in the second element of Passover – the Unleavened Bread!

- Leaven in Scripture is symbolic of sin, and no paschal sacrifice was to be offered with leaven (Ex 34:25). Messiah was prophesied to be One who would be “sinless”. He did no violence, neither was deceit found in His mouth (Is. 53:9). He was the “righteous Branch of David” (Jer. 23:5-6) and none of His enemies could even accuse Him of sin (Jn. 8:26). Yet, “He who knew no sin was made sin for us ...” (2 Cor.5:21) because God “laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6). How did He do this? The answer is in the third element of Passover – The Passover Lamb!
- On the night of the first Passover, the blood of the sacrificial lamb was personally applied on the doorposts and the lintel of each Jewish household. Only by this were those sheltering “under the blood” saved from God’s wrathful judgment:

“When I see the blood I will pass over you” (Ex. 12:13)

Why is blood so important? God’s Word tells us:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for your souls” (Lev. 17:11). It was the shedding of blood (by “violent death” – so Leon Morris) that brought atonement for man’s sin. In other words, the substitution of one life for another was the means of a sinner being reconciled to God. Israel’s Messiah became that Substitute for all sinners for He gave up His life that we might live (Is. 53:6).

All of this was typified in the Passover lamb. Consider the Type/Antitype correlation with Jesus of Nazareth –

(1) Without blemish (Ex. 12:5 ; Is. 53:4-6/1 Pet. 1:18).

(2) No bones broken (Num. 9:12; Ex. 12:46/Jn. 19:31-36).

(3) Substitute sacrifice for sin (Is. 53:5, 6, 8, 11, 12/Rom. 5:8; 1 Pt. 2:24-25; 1 Jn. 1:7, 9).

(4) Annual observance versus “once for all” sacrifice (Ex. 12:14/Heb. 10:12, reflecting Jesus’ words “Accomplished!” or “Fulfilled!” in Jn. 19:30).

(5) From the 10th to 14th Nisan, the lamb was “inspected” to see if there were any “faults” (Ex. 12:2-5). Jesus went in and out of Jerusalem from Bethany for four days from “Palm Sunday” (Mt. 21), observed Passover with His disciples on the night on which he was betrayed (Jn.13) and was crucified at the exact time of the Jewish Passover “between the evenings” on 15th Nisan – thus fulfilling prophecy (Ex. 12:/Jn. 19).

Elijah pays an important part in the feast of Passover. A place is set for him; a seat is left vacant for him to arrive and a child is asked to go to the front door to see if he is coming. Elijah would herald the arrival of Messiah (Mal. 4). Jesus said that John the Baptizer “came in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk.1:17) and that “(in him), Elijah had come already, and they knew him not” (Mt. 17:12). In the person of John, then, Elijah came, announcing the coming of Israel’s Messiah:

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).

Conclusion

Thus through the three original Passover elements and other related prophecies, God’s tremendous plan of redemption is revealed. The key point is clear to Jewish and Gentile communities alike: In the Person and Work of Jesus of Nazareth, all aspects of Passover are fulfilled. All believers agree with the Apostle: “Christ our sacrifice was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

Israel’s Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ is “the firstfruits of those who are asleep” (1 Cor.15:20). He died as our Passover Lamb, and was buried, but He was raised from the dead and is alive for ever more!

Easter is truly a time of celebration, freedom and joy – in every respect, to the one who believes. Hallelujah! – He’s risen indeed!

We wish you a truly blessed Easter! – Deane and Margaret Woods.

New Voluntary Representatives Appointed

The Friends of Israel is pleased to announce the appointment of Max and Rhonda Hall as its representatives in the Newcastle, Hunter Valley and Central Coast regions of New South Wales.

They will also be involved in ministries to the Jewish communities in Sydney from time to time.

In welcoming Max and Rhonda most warmly, the Mission invites you to pray for them as they begin another chapter in their illustrious Christian ministry experience.

Max was born in Sydney Australia in 1937. His great grandfather was Rabbi Aaron Alexander Levi who served the Jewish community of Sydney from 1851 to 1883.

Max was apprenticed at Garden Island Naval Dockyard Sydney intending to be a Marine Engineer, but he became a Christian in July 1955 and God called him into Theological College. He graduated in 1962 as a *Churches of Christ Pastor.

He and Rhonda met at a Christian Youth Camp during Christmas 1956 and married in 1962. They now have three daughters, two sons and nineteen living grandchildren.

Max's ministries in Sydney, country NSW and Newcastle, resulted in steady growth due to his constant emphasis on biblical exposition with relevant, personal application. He has preached at several evangelistic crusades, missionary conventions and prophetic conferences throughout Australia and South East Asia. He also had a ministry with university students in Newcastle, especially among Asians.

Max's most recent ministry was at The Heights Family *Church of Christ Newcastle where he now serves as Elder, having passed on the ministry to his son-in-law. Prophetic conferences are held there each year.



Max Aaron G. Hall & his wife, Rhonda.

Max has lectured at the Hunter School of Biblical Studies which he and a pastoral colleague established. He has also lectured at The Word of Life Bible College, St Albans, and New Tribes Bible College, Sydney.

Max holds the rank of Squadron Leader (Retired) with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), having served 25 years as a Reserve Chaplain at the FA-18 Hornet Base at Williamstown.

Max's Jewish ancestry and Old Testament knowledge equipped him to work among Jewish people in Sydney, where for several years he led Bible Studies in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs. He and a colleague visited

many Jewish homes where some Jewish brethren accepted *Yeshua Ha Meshiach*. His passion is the Second Advent, Israel's prophetic future, and Creationism (vs. Evolution). A highlight of his life was an extensive four week tour of Israel traveling on a motor bike with his brother in law. This was during Succoth (Feast of Tabernacles) and Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) in 1975.

*Explanatory note for our US readership: The Churches (sic) of Christ denomination in Australia should not be confused with the similarly designated Church of Christ in America. They have no affiliation, or doctrinal similarities whatsoever.

**The Friends of Israel
Gospel Ministry
(Australia) Inc.**
P0 Box 171 Melrose Park
SA 5039 Australia

Office and Books:

c/o EBC Community Centre
Suite 406 (Upstairs)
Cnr. Rothesay Ave and Dorene St
St Marys SA 5042 AUSTRALIA
Phone/Fax: (+ 618) 08 8276 1333
Email: australianoffice@foi.org