

A child-friendly, Christ-centered Passover Seder

(by Todd and Renée Ellison, homeschoolhowtos.com, revised 2021)

For those of you doing a home family Passover who have children attending who have short attention spans (who can't sit through a traditional 3-hour Seder), here is the script for a simpler, shorter celebration, with variety and participation for the children. They will learn and grow from this experience, which is, after all, one of the most important reasons why we pass this experience down from one generation to the next. Also, if your children have an early bedtime, know that it is possible to begin a Passover seder as early as mid- or late-afternoon—and the version of the service as described here is much shorter than most. After the beginning explanations, the ceremony is quite simple.

Cleansing out the leaven:

The bulk of this removal of leaven from the home should have been done by suppertime, before the start of the Seder ceremony (anytime after 3 p.m. [when Yeshua died] and before the sun sets [which is about 7:45 p.m. where we live]). Don't forget to clean the leaven out of the toaster. If you do leave a little leaven on the edge of a cupboard, or under a teacup on a counter turned upside down, you can draw attention to it one last time at the beginning of the Seder. A child can then ceremonially use a little brush to sweep it into the trash or into a napkin, to be taken outside straightaway. This is a picture of getting the sin out of our lives and cleansing ourselves before eating the Passover.

Why we observe the Passover:

Basically, we observe it because that is **the Lord's command**. Passover has been observed in past millennia by His followers, and it will be celebrated in the coming millennium. It has never been done away with. It is an everlasting ordinance “throughout all your generations.” Furthermore, **Yeshua validated it**. He taught a teaching Seder the evening before His crucifixion, when He became the Passover lamb. Obedience always leads to blessing. A side effect is that this sets us apart from the world. We are in the world, but not of it (Romans 12:2).

As we do it, we look back in time, to re-enact **a commemorative object lesson** that reminds us (and gives us opportunity to teach the next generation) what happened to our ancestors and how the Savior's blood gave us the gift of salvation. Also, we perk up and look forward in time, because the Exodus that started the Passover (and that it commemorates) is a precursor of the Greater Exodus that we will experience if we are still alive during the latter half of the Great Tribulation (Joel 2:1-10 and Revelation 9:1-11).

Note: two holidays/feast days are back to back at this time. **Passover** is one day, which ends (as the sun sets) with an evening of celebrating the deliverance from the plague of the firstborn. In the gospel accounts the Passover day is wrapped into the seven days of **Unleavened Bread** that celebrate the Exodus out of Egypt and the first week in the wilderness. So, *the day after Passover* day is a holy day.

Simultaneous timing:

- 1) When Yeshua entered the city of Jerusalem on a donkey, the reason the people had palm branches in their hands was that they had just waved them over the chosen sacrificial Passover lamb. **The Messiah was following the procession of that lamb.** Historians of antiquity record that there were as many as 250,000 lambs slain during this time of year. A lot of sweet-smelling smoke was wafting up from Jerusalem!
- 2) Both the Passover lamb and Yeshua were **examined for spot and blemish at the same time** for four days (Yeshua, by Herod and Pilate, etc.).
- 3) Both were **captives**—tied to the altar, as it were—for **six hours before they died.** Yeshua was hanging on the cross by 9 a.m. and died at 3 that afternoon.
- 4) The followers of God [literally!] **left Egypt early the next morning,** because they were not to go outside that previous night while the angel of death was passing over.

Historically, the timing of the Passover week events has been misrepresented:

Catholics (and most Protestants, following them) claim that Yeshua was crucified on Good Friday and resurrected early on Sunday morning. This gives us only tiny bits of three days—not three full days as the sign of Jonah told us it would be. Yeshua was actually crucified on a Wednesday (Passover day) and rose from the grave on Saturday evening at the close of Sabbath—this timing yields three full days.

And, with that background of explanation, here is **the Seder**—the order (and brief instructions) for the service.

Elijah's place: Some Jews set a place at the table for Elijah.

Blood on the doorposts: you might want to have the children draw a Hebrew letter Hay on a 3X5 card with red crayon or red-inked pen...doing across the top of the card and down the right side and then finishing with a shorter stick, not connecting at the top on the left side, forming the letter Hay, which stands for "I am the DOOR." Next, use a paint brush and a bowl of water to paint your actual front door with the same strokes. Each child gets to do it after the father/leader does it.



Seder overview: the elements of the service that are done before the dinner feast are focused on the deliverance from slavery, whereas the events after dinner are full of praise and thanks given to the Almighty. Encourage all to pay attention, because the Exodus is a precursor of the Greater Exodus that we will experience during the latter half of the Great Tribulation—ending with a plague of locusts and darkness for the final five months (Joel 2:1-10 and Revelation 9:1-11). For example, the five months of darkness will hit 1,150 days after we see the altar on the Temple Mount shut down—right on the anniversary of the plague of darkness in Egypt on the 6th day of the month of Aviv.

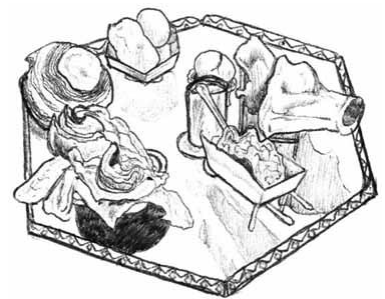
Lighting of candles: at this point the mother of the household, wearing a head covering, lights the candles, naming them: the candle that makes us think of Yeshua's work of creation, and the candle of His salvation. He made us, and He has redeemed us.

All recline on couches or on comfortable soft-pillowed seats (because we have been freed from slavery to sin and have entered into spiritual rest in Yeshua).

Ceremonial washing of the hands (or of the feet, as the Lord introduced that to this service, as recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 13, verses 4-5 and 12-14). Use little wash tubs or bowls of warm water, heated wet wash cloths, and a soft drying towel to one another.

Prayer of thanksgiving and consecration: the father (or whoever is the leader for the evening—uncle, brother, son, grandfather) thanks God for the Passover festival and what it means. Specifically: prior to this evening we looked around our property to remove all leaven from our homes; we searched for it, to root it out. Likewise, **we must examine ourselves** spiritually so we partake of this, the Lord's Supper, in purity (1 Corinthians 11: 23-32). Leaven symbolizes the pervasiveness of sin; the unleavened bread reminds us of the body of the sinless Messiah, given for us (Luke 22:19).

Explanation and eating of each part of the Seder plate:



Each item on the Seder plate is symbolic of our redemption and deliverance by Messiah.

- The **shank bone of a lamb**, roasted in fire (not boiled/watered down). (This item isn't eaten!) The New Testament contains more than 30 references to Yeshua as the Lamb of God; not one of His bones was broken. Fire speaks of divine judgment. The shank is the bone that is between the knee and the ankle; this was the bone the soldiers would break to hasten death by crucifixion.
- **Roasted egg** (this is solely by Rabbinical custom; some families have no eggs on the plate at all). This is a Hebrew symbol of mourning and of new life triumphing over death, and of our hope of spiritual restoration.
- **Bitter herbs (horseradish)**. Recalling the hardships of slavery in Egypt and the sorrow of our captivity to our sin.
- **Greens (parsley)**. A symbol of hyssop, a cleansing herb (Psalm 51:7), that was dipped in the lamb's blood for sprinkling the lintels and doorposts of the Hebrews' homes that night in Egypt (Exodus 12:22) and that was on the sponge of wine put in Yeshua's lips just before he died (John 19:29). Each person dips a sprig of parsley twice in his or her own saltwater bowl, reminiscent of the bitter tears of our lives of past slavery in Egypt and of Yeshua's tears when He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41)—and of the Egyptians' death in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:22).
- **Charoseth** (a sweet mixture of apple-cinnamon-raisin-walnuts and wine or grape juice). This is a symbol of the **mortar** used in between bricks. Its brown color reminds us of the mortar that the Hebrew slaves used to make bricks in Egypt, to build the pyramids etc. for their masters. Its spices remind us of the spices the women brought to the tomb to embalm

the body of the Lord.

- **Matzah (yeast-free bread).** The father (or leader) pulls out the middle piece of the stack of three matzot from the container in front of him, breaks it in half, returns one half to the pile, and wraps the other half in white linen and hides it (symbolic of the breaking, burial and later resurrection of our Lord). The children will hunt for this piece after dinner. For now, each person takes a piece of the remaining matzah and tastes it. To begin the ceremony, no other taste is in our mouth but this symbol of His broken body. He said, "Take and eat; this is My body, broken for you."

1st cup: the cup of sanctification. "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:6). The wine or grape juice may be served warm, like shed blood. Pour a little into each person's glass or cup; everyone drinks it. Because there will be four cups throughout the Seder, having too much grape juice each time would spike and crash children's blood sugar levels. (Grape juice has a high glycemic index). Drinking a token amount of juice each time will serve the purpose.

2nd cup: the cup of deliverance. "I will deliver you/ I will free you from being slaves to them" (Exodus 6:6; read Luke 22:17-18). The leader pours each person a second cup of grape juice. Again, we only drink a token amount. This, along with the unleavened bread we eat after this "wine," completes the symbol of communion—His body and His blood—as well as reminding us of the great deliverance from Egypt and bondage.

The youngest child's question and the father's answers:

The youngest son/child at the table asks one question four times, which gives the elder/the father an opportunity to give a brief explanation of this evening's historical background and its present meaningfulness.

1. "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The father answers (as he serves the unleavened bread): "On all other nights we can eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but **tonight we eat only matzah**. This represents the bread of haste. Our ancestors could not wait for their breads to rise when they were fleeing slavery in Egypt, and so they were flat when they came out of the oven. Leaven is a symbol of the pervasiveness of sin; the unleavened bread reminds us of the body of the sinless Messiah, given for us" (and he reads Luke 22:19). He finishes his answer by saying, "Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in need come and celebrate Passover."
2. "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The father answers (as he serves the *maror*): "On all other nights, we can eat any kind of herbs and vegetables, but **tonight we eat only bitter herbs**. This reminds us how bitter it is to be enslaved. We are thinking of the bondage our ancestors endured while in Egypt."
3. "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The father answers (as he passes the salt water): "On all other nights, we don't dip our vegetables into anything—not even once, but **tonight we dip twice**. Everyone may now dip your bitter herbs into the *charoseth*, which

sweetens the bitterness of the herb and reminds us that the slavery of Egypt was sweetened by freedom. The first dip of our parsley—into the saltwater—symbolizes the tears of someone who is captive in bitter bondage. The second parsley dip—into the *charoseth*—reminds us that even the harshest enslavement is sweetened by God’s promise of redemption in Yeshua, the Savior and Deliverer.”

4. “Why is this night different from all other nights?” The father answers: “On all other nights, we can eat either sitting up straight or reclining, but **tonight we all recline**. In ancient times, a person who reclined at a meal was a free person, while slaves and servants stood. We ourselves once were slaves to sin, but the Lord in His mercy has redeemed us with a mighty hand. Tonight, we celebrate our deliverance and freedom, so we sit gratefully and appreciatively in comfort, enjoying our freedom and wishing the same for all people.”

Read Psalm 105:23-38 (assign someone to read it, or take turns).

Next, all in unison recite after the leader the names of the **10 plagues of Egypt**, as each person spoons out wine from the 2nd cup (*deliverance*) into a saucer to represent the accumulation of the plagues. Mention that each plague was an attack on one of the gods of the Egyptians. Talk about the cost of sin: *it takes us further* than we wanted to go, *it makes us stay longer* than we wanted to stay, and *it costs us more* than we were willing or able to pay. The Messiah bore it for us. He delivered us. We ponder all this as we spoon out our juice and say:

Water into blood; Frogs; Gnats (lice); Flies; Egyptian livestock died;
Boils; Hail; Locusts; Darkness; Death of the firstborn

Next, all pick up their saucers of wine (full of *iniquity*) as the youngest child asks: “Is it for this that we praise The Almighty?” Father replies: “No, for He loved the Egyptians even as He loved us. But it is for the Heavenly Father’s infinite mercies that we praise Him. Thank you, Lord, for Your infinite mercy, because You paid for our sins.”

Set aside the Seder plates, and bring out the feast.

Toward the end of dinner (if the children’s patience and energy are holding) you can read **Psalm 118**—the entire passage (you could take turns reading through the 29 verses). Everyone can join in each time it comes to “His steadfast love endures forever.”

If this reading would be “a bridge too far,” you can skip right ahead to the **thankfulness sharing around the table**. Each person who wants to, remarks on something the Heavenly Father has done for them personally—something that makes them grateful. After each testimony everyone says, “**Dayenu!**” (which means, it would have been enough). Then, after all have shared (we often go around several times), someone announces, “Then how much more, doubled and redoubled, is the claim God has upon our thankfulness! He took us out of Egypt and executed judgments and justice. He tore the sea apart for us. He satisfied our needs in the desert, and gave us the Sabbath and His Torah. He brought us into the land of Israel and built us the House of His choosing, to atone for all our sins.”

Next is an interlude for special fun for the children: they search for the **aphikomen** (afikomen, “that which comes last,” the missing piece of matzah). When a child finds it and brings it to the father, he breaks it into olive-sized pieces. As he passes the pieces around, all can repeat after him, “We thank you, Lord, for bread / and for the commandment to eat unleavened bread at this time.” Each person dips their broken piece of bread into the bitter herbs and sweet charoseth mixture and eats. This may have been the “sop” that Yeshua handed to Judas (John 13:26). The father/elder then reads (or asks others around the table to read) from some of the relevant New Testament scriptures (John 6:35-40, 48-51, 53-58, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

This introduces **the Lord’s Supper**: His phrase, “This is my body…” was spoken as they were eating (Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24). This is a good point in the service to quote those verses and to celebrate the first portion of the Lord’s Supper. Until Yeshua, after He had given thanks at the end of the meal, broke custom and instituted this new memorial, Jews observing a Seder had a tradition of never eating anything after the lamb of the supper. Now, the Paschal lamb no longer has the same significance.

3rd cup: the cup of redemption. Having finished the supper, read Psalm 126 together, and then pour the 3rd cup of wine. This also known as **the cup of blessing**, because it comes after the blessing or grace after meals. God said, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment” (Exodus 6:6). Yeshua did this at the Last Supper. The elder can now read aloud from Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:25 while all prayerfully meditate on these verses. He then says each of the following phrases, and all repeat after him: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who redeemed us, / and has brought us to this night. / So, O Lord, bring us to other festivals, / happy in the building of Thy City, / and there may we eat of the sacrifices and the paschal offerings, / whose blood will come unto the walls of Thy altar for acceptance. / Then shall we give thanks to Thee with a new song / for our redemption and the liberation of our soul. / Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel. / Blessed art Thou, Creator of the fruit of the vine.”

4th cup: the cup of praise. Celebrate a toast of **thanksgiving** for the goodness of the Almighty (without drinking). Yeshua did not drink this cup; He reserved it to drink with us only when we are at last together in the Kingdom (Matthew 6:29). *We*, however, *do* drink it now (this was a ceremony of *four* cups). This is also known as **the cup of completion**, because the LORD said, “I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God” (Exodus 6:7). When His atoning work was completed on the cross, the Messiah cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:28, 30).

Finally, everyone can shout: “**Next year in Jerusalem!**”

Benediction, and then we close by **singing a hymn of praise** (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26). If you don’t have a piano and a pianist on hand, you could visit Hymnary.org or Cyberhymnal.org (that site offers over 6,800 hymns and gospel songs, with the words, historical notes, and audio of the piano playing through each hymn). Suggestions include “Lest I forget Gethsemane” and “O sacred head, now wounded.”