


A PASSOVER BACKSTORY


INCLUDING THE DO IT YOURSELF PASSOVER SEDER



**OMG.
DINNER ROLLS?
WE'RE GONNA BE
EXCOMMUNICATED!**



**JESUS CHRIST,
WHO FORGOT THE
MATZAH?**



**ARE
EASTER BUNNIES
KOSHER?**



**WAITER,
SEPARATE
CHECKS PLEASE.**



- DR. RANDY WEISS -



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

“Like so many American Christians, I love studying the Jewish background of our faith, but not having grown up in those traditions, I’m always asking questions. That’s why I’m such a fan of Dr. Randy Weiss and have followed his teaching for decades.

His new book, “A Passover Backstory: Including the Do It Yourself Passover Seder,” is a remarkable look at the Passover Haggadah - one of the most symbolic events in the Jewish calendar.

As always, Dr. Weiss illuminates the history and meaning of this nearly lost practice - and does it with a terrific sense of humor. Get this book. It will open up your faith in a completely new way, and transform the way you think about the Jewish roots of Christianity.”

Phil Cooke, Ph.D.

Media consultant, filmmaker, and author of “The Way Back: How Christians Blew Our Credibility and How We Get It Back”



A PASSOVER BACKSTORY

INCLUDING THE DO IT YOURSELF PASSOVER SEDER

- DR. RANDY WEISS -

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Numerous other versions of the Holy Bible are cited in this work with abbreviations listed herein. If readers wonder why a single version was not used for consistency, it is because the author enjoys studying many versions to broaden his own understanding. It is hoped that readers will consider reading different Scripture translations to compare and enjoy the work of many versions.

It is herein acknowledged that some translations are better than others. But for those who wonder which Bible is actually the best version, my advice is that any good Bible that is regularly picked up and prayerfully studied is best. Select any reliable version of the Bible and read it. It will always be a better choice than a more “perfect translation” gathering dust on a shelf or simply displayed on a coffee table. Each version cited in this work is excellent in its own way. I am thankful for each of these, and the many other excellent translations and paraphrases in my library.

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DEDICATIONS:

This book is dedicated to the heroines who made this book, this festival, and our lives possible. I must give thanks to God for my Mother of blessed memory (Sylvia Weiss 8/27/1928-7/2/2006). Through a very complicated pregnancy and delivery, she loved me enough to give me life. The doctors told her that a decision would need to be made. Her life could be spared, or the life of her unborn child could be spared. But it was highly unlikely that both of us could live. My mother didn't hesitate. She made my Father of blessed memory (Arthur Weiss 6/18/1919-8/1/1998) promise to not come home unless I was with him. My Mother valued my life more than her own. I'm crying as I type this because I know I should have been a better son. I don't know if my Dad could have honored the promise he had made to my Mom in the hospital. I'm thankful her sacrifice was not required. A mother's love is unique. My Mom came from a more noble generation. Nowadays, any hint of danger to the mother, or of birthing an imperfect child, is cause to snuff out the life of the unborn. Thanks Mom!

This book also acknowledges five additional heroines who chose to give life, risk life, spare life, and selflessly provide a home so life could flourish. May God bless the memories of the mother of Moses, the sister of Moses, the fearless Jewish midwives Shiphrah and Puah, and the daughter of Pharaoh.

Finally, I thank God for my wife Adrienne, the mother of our six children. Her gracious and godly example guides our wonderful daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters. Adrienne probably had questions if this book would ever actually be completed. I know she became very tired of hearing of my endless rewrites. On the blessed occasion of the last rewrite of this text, I declare my wholehearted agreement with the great Winston Churchill.

“Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public.”

I declare this book now done & flung.

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FOREWORD: (A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE)

By Louis Libin

Why is This Book Different from All Others?

Thank you to Dr. Randy Weiss for this opportunity to give an introduction from the Orthodox Jewish, though not Rabbinical perspective. Dr. Weiss mentions the enormous number of commentaries on the Passover *Haggadah*. I can assure all that this book is unlike any other Passover-related texts.

The holiday of Passover marks the anniversary of the birth of the Jewish nation. The story of the Jewish nation is the story of individuals who became a family who then became a people for all time. It deals primarily with the events in Egypt which led from slavery to liberation, though it also spans the entire period from Abraham to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The *Haggadah* is the “Jewish” Declaration of Independence that speaks of the ideals and values which constitute the essence of our national consciousness and identity.

The highly structured *Seder* or “ordered,” is a combination “service and meal” unique to any other year-round. The *Seder* is the most inclusive of all Jewish events. Those hosting a *Seder* are always encouraged to fill their *Seder* table with a very diverse group of guests. The main portion of the *Seder* is *Maggid*, prior to the meal, which is a collection of passages, legends, and related praises, blessings and psalms that center on the story of the departure of the nation of Israel from Egypt. After years of enslavement, and a series of unheeded warnings by Moses to Pharaoh resulting in the Ten Plagues, God liberated a nation which

had grown from the original family of 70 people. Traditionally, Passover is a holiday of preparation. There is the cleaning, the cooking, arranging as well as reviewing the *Haggadah* because one must learn and teach at the *Seder*.

The word “*Haggadah*” means to tell, it tells every Jew three things: who you are, where you came from, and what you stand for. The message inherent in the *Haggadah* is that Jewish identity and continuity hinge on encouraging children to ask questions -- and being prepared as parents to provide sensitive and substantive answers. In Judaism, being learned, knowledgeable, and wise is a prerequisite to becoming a stand-alone Jew.

Dr. Weiss, through this book, is highly successful in bringing the story of the *Haggadah* to those who are not familiar with the history, the story and the customs. The key to the *Seder* is that it should be relevant, not dry and boring. This book by Dr. Weiss is not a dry and boring interpretation of this educational ritual-experience. It is a new interpretation, definitely not targeted for everyone. Bear in mind however, that there are thousands of *Haggadah* interpretations, and each has a target audience, even for the strictly Jewish audience, there are specific audiences for Ashkenaz, Sephardic, Reform and the list goes on. So, congratulations to Dr. Weiss, enjoy the *Haggadah* and enjoy your *Seder*!

**FOREWORD:
(FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE)**

by Sandy Shoshani

National Director Be'ad Chaim, Israel Prolife

Reading through the text of this wonderfully entertaining and intelligently written commentary on the Passover Seder and *Haggadah*, I felt at “home”. Like Dr. Randy Weiss, I was raised in a traditional Jewish home where the celebration of Passover with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins was a highlight of the year. I loved listening to my Papa read through the *Haggadah* and singing the traditional songs with tremendous enthusiasm, table thumping, family love, and comradery. For me, Passover was a celebration of family and love, tradition, and heritage. My people, the Jewish people, had been rescued by God from slavery and became a special nation. Yet, it was not until I found my Jewish Messiah that I realized that Passover was more than history, tradition and nationalism. It is the story of the freedom of every individual from the slavery of sin to freedom through the Messiah Jesus. It says in the *Haggadah*, “Each of us should see himself as personally coming out of Egypt and you shall tell your sons – so has God done to me by taking me from Egypt.” When the people of Israel faced the Red Sea in front and the Egyptians behind, God created the solution by parting the Sea. As Randy eloquently encourages, “faith declares **I cannot fail with God**. Wisdom declares, **I cannot succeed without Him**.” His book reflects the true Passover story, from helplessness to hope, victory and freedom.

Two special and unique elements in Randy’s *Haggadah* have been inspired by his passion for life and children. His loving

inclusion of all those who are absent from the Passover Seder is a beautiful memorial to their lives. He remembers the 1.5 million Jewish children whose lives were taken in the Holocaust and the millions of children whose lives were snuffed out by abortion before they could be held and loved. Throughout history, the enemies of God's people have tried to kill the children and destroy our future. Pharaoh commanded that the midwives put to death any male babies born to the Israelites. But these incredibly brave women, Shiphra and Puah, protected the boys. He then decreed that the boys be thrown into the Nile. But Moses' mother, his sister Miriam, and Pharaoh's own daughter had the faith to rescue Moses. Dr. Weiss commemorates these courageous heroines. Five courageous women preserved the life of Moses so that God's purposes could be accomplished through him. During the Second Temple Period, at the birth of Jesus, King Herod commanded that all of the Jewish male babies be destroyed so that the King Messiah would not live. His decree could not prevail over the will of God. Today, the lives of the unborn must be protected. In Israel, it is estimated that we have had two million abortions since 1948. Generations of families have been lost because of abortion. The prayers in this *Haggadah* for the protection of these precious, unborn children, created in the image of God, are an integral part of the story of God's protection and salvation plan for His people.

In this unique book, Dr. Weiss has done a superb job of emphasizing the personal application of Passover. He captured the essence of the Passover Seder. Beyond the story of the people of Israel being miraculously freed by God's Mighty Arm from slavery in Egypt, God has extended His Mighty Arm to each of us through our Messiah Jesus. God still desires to rescue us and free us so that we might walk in freedom.

**As you journey through this Passover
Haggadah, may you experience new depths of
your own Exodus to freedom.**

A PASSOVER BACKSTORY

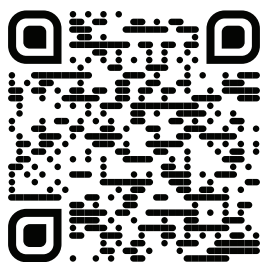
INCLUDING THE DO IT YOURSELF PASSOVER SEDER

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WANT TO SEE A PASSOVER SEDER IN ACTION?

**READY TO UNLOCK MORE SECRETS
OF THIS SACRED TRADITION?**

Scan the QR code below and get exclusive access to teaching and demonstration videos from Dr. Randy Weiss. Join him as he unlocks the deep and rich heritage, walking viewers through each section in detail.



Directions: Open your phone or tablet's camera, center the QR code and click the link that pops up to begin your journey into seeing the Passover in a whole new light.



INTRODUCTION

**WHY IS THIS HAGGADAH
DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHERS?**

WHY IS THIS HAGGADAH DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHERS?

My *haggadah* is different because my family celebrates Passover (Pesach) a little differently than most Jewish families. In other words, this is NOT Your *Bubbeh's* (Jewish grandmother) Passover *Seder*¹. So, this is probably not her *haggadah*.

**This is My Family's Personal Annotated
Messianic Jewish Passover *Haggadah*.**

I wrote it to help my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren carry on a tradition that, with God's help, will never be forgotten.

In this volume you will find the complete Jewish liturgy we use for our Passover service. It includes English, Hebrew, and many Hebrew transliterations back into English for your convenience. This is my personal *haggadah*. I hope you will make it yours too. But before we get to that important section of this book, I must explain why you should take the “whole guided tour.”

¹ A Passover seder is the organized discussion surrounding a Passover meal. There are specific details explained about the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt at the time of the first Passover. A Passover liturgy is used by the participants called a *haggadah*.

The tour will help us all avoid confusion. For example, some folks might not be aware what a *haggadah* is or the purpose it serves in a *seder*. Without an introduction to the terms, the words themselves might confuse because they come from a different language and culture. The language is Hebrew and the culture is Jewish. A *seder* is the event where the Passover stories found in the book of Exodus are retold by Jewish and non-Jewish families who celebrate this biblical festival. The *haggadah* is the liturgical book that contains the specific prayers and the order of service. Be aware I called Passover a biblical festival, not a Jewish holiday. There is a difference. Passover is a festival commanded to be observed in the Bible. It is not a fabrication limited to the tradition, myth, or sectarian preferences of religious Jews. It is more! God commanded all of His people to remember the Exodus at Passover. It is a biblical injunction; not a religious preference. This book merely expresses how my family does this. And I invite you to join us as we approach this important biblical requirement.

You have been invited on a curious faith journey to a destination of sanctified ritual without being swallowed by retail religion. We will arrive at our Passover celebration with our integrity intact because we respect tradition and history. But we are also unafraid to question the traditions we embrace or to reject those that no longer satisfy.

While you read, if you allow me some space in your heart, I will share mine. I will also provide thinking believers with fascinating facts about Judaism, Christianity, and the crucial biblical connections that will strengthen your faith and your family. You see, Passover is about family. Everyone participates. In this way, the knowledge of God's faithfulness is remembered

and shared with the next generation. As we say in Hebrew, *Lador vador*, from generation-to-generation. To preserve our future, we share our past. The cycle must never cease.

As Moses taught us,

“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.” (Ex. 12:26-27 JPS)

Although every *haggadah* contains the same well-known story, not all of them are created equal. There are more than 4,500 editions of the Passover *haggadah*. This version will specifically point us to *Yeshua HaMaschiach*—Jesus the Messiah. Additionally, my *haggadah* is backwards—at least when compared to traditional *haggadot* (plural of *haggadah*).

Hebrew is read from right to left so a normal Hebrew *haggadah* appears to be starting at the back of the book. To keep things simple for my non-Jewish friends, I’ve written this to read from left to right. You can decide who is backwards when we’ve concluded our *seder*.

Passover is all about questions. Therefore, this book will ask more questions than a TV game show. And for every question asked, answers will be found. The prize is better than a game show offers. Money can easily be lost. The wisdom and knowledge that comes through learning is enduring and far more precious. Hopefully, the process of evaluating this material will cause you to ask your own questions. It is my prayer that God will guide your studies beyond this book. He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

Herein I provide information that I want my family and friends to understand. Jews, Christians, and Jewish Christians should know these things too. This book will help us retell the stories, learn new stories, enjoy a *seder* meal, and . . . if you will tolerate a few of my jokes, and have some fun.

4 QUESTIONS BEFORE THE 4 QUESTIONS?²

As you will learn at any good Passover *seder*, it is a night of fours. And there are at least four specific reasons this *haggadah* is different from most other *haggadot*: **In almost every other haggadah, a Passover superhero is entirely left out.**

1st QUESTION:

Do you know who is missing?

ANSWER:

Moses. The reason generally given by rabbis for the absence of stories about Moses, is to make certain that we focus our attention on God.³ The Lord brought us out of Egypt, not Moses. I agree! However, in our family, we want to talk about God and Moses. Moishe Rabbeinu, Moses our great rabbi, is too important for my family to ignore. But fear not, we believe it is possible to walk and chew gum. Everyone who uses our haggadah has proven themselves to have above-average intelligence. (As evidenced by their selection of this special haggadah.) We won't lose sight of God's unique,

2 Every seder contains a recitation of the famous Four Questions. Hang in there with me. We'll sing them shortly.

3 In some haggadot, the name of Moses is mentioned in a song, "Who Knows One?"

awesome power to deliver. Moses does cast a long shadow in my book. Fear not, the light of God removes shadows and eclipses all other lesser lights.

In most other haggadot, half of the population of Egypt is left out.

2nd QUESTION:

Which half?

ANSWER:

The Women are completely ignored! It is as though no women participated in the Exodus. If your family is like ours, you'll agree that all of our women are beautiful, intelligent, inspiring, faithful, and necessary for any joyous Passover. So, we include a discussion about 5 Passover heroines in the Exodus account, beginning with the mother of Moses.

DO YOU KNOW HER NAME? (This isn't the 3rd question. In my book, it doesn't count as a real question until the answer is provided. ("DO YOU KNOW HER NAME" is simply a provocative inquiry for marketing purposes.) Wait for it . . . come to our seder or read my haggadah and you will learn her name.

In most other haggadot, the most important Jewish text in the history of mankind is left out. With that unfortunate decision, the most important Jewish man in history is also excised from the discussion.

3rd QUESTION:

Do you know what Jewish book and what Jewish man are entirely ignored?

ANSWER:

*The Brit Hadasha and Yeshua HaMaschiach, the New Covenant aka the New Testament, and Jesus the Messiah are typically ignored. That is why I am compelled to explain elements of this Passover backstory as part of what I consider to be the Jesus sequel. It certainly begins with Moses. But it does not end there. We need a Messiah, not just a deliverer! Within many haggadot, the Messiah is referenced. Belief in the coming Messiah is one of the **Thirteen Principles of the Faith** declared by Moses Maimonides.⁴ Maimonides is famously known as Rambam. He was one of Judaism's greatest philosophers and rabbis. His Thirteen Principles comprise the "fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations." Therefore, one can argue that, to be a Jew is to believe in the coming of the Messiah. I wish more modern Jews understood the Jewish requirement to believe in our coming Messiah. It would make it much easier to explain my own personal beliefs as a Jew. Within our haggadah, the Jewish Messiah will be referenced from both a traditional perspective and from my personal viewpoint.*

⁴ The Articles of the Jewish Creed were formulated by Moses Maimonides in the 12th century C.E. They are contained in the Daily Prayer Book of my Zaidie (of blessed memory) and in many Jewish prayer books. Rabbi Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler, The Authorized Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire, Eyre And Spottiswoode, LTD, (London 5673–1912) 89-90.

The world's best-known Jewish Passover seder was the Last Supper. But it seems many folks missed that memo. It is one of the few events recounted in all four Gospels.

I intend to clear the debris from the bridge that connects our two ancient world religions. The bridge is intact. I just want to remove the confusing piles of rubble and point the way for all to see the clear path that the God of Israel has built for His children. At the same time, I hope to remove any ancient vestiges of Christian anti-Semitism. Hatred and ignorance have littered the path to Jesus creating an unfortunate maze that blocks the road and hinders my people from considering my Messiah.

In case you doubt that this form of racism exists in Christendom, you must be forewarned that some Christians remain unaware that Jesus was an observant Jew. Others still believe that the Jewish people have been eternally rejected by God. Nothing could be further from the truth.

God made an unbreakable covenant with the Jewish people. If He was willing to break His unconditional promise to my people, why would any people trust Him to keep His promise to them?

God is faithful. He keeps His promises! I'm delighted to report that tremendous throngs of Christians have fallen in love with the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and the Jewish origins of the Christian faith. I am even more pleased to tell you that a form of revival has reached the Jewish people.

When I came to faith and was called to the ministry in early 1973, I thought I was the only Jew in the world who believed in Jesus. I was wrong. Not many months later, I learned that there were as many as 5,000-7,000 Jews worldwide who believed in Jesus. Today, there are literally hundreds of thousands of Jewish believers in Jesus. That is revival! A Jerusalem Post article from November 1, 2017 quoted a study that suggested one-fifth of Jewish millennials believe Jesus is the son of God. The survey was questioned by the Post, but the implication was nevertheless fascinating.

It was a Jewish world into which Jesus was born. It was the Jewish Scriptures that Jesus studied. It was from the writings of Moses and the Jewish prophets that Jesus preached. Lest anyone forget, the Christian Church was birthed through a young Jewish maiden. She lived in a Jewish land. Jesus was surrounded by Jewish followers. All the original disciples were Jewish.

Did you know that the first 15 popes were Jewish.⁵

So, if you wonder how a Jewish holiday can be relevant to Christians, the better question is “How could it not?” Remember, Jesus was a Jew. And with all due respect, John the Baptist was not a Baptist. He was a good Jewish boy.

Christianity was a 1st century Jewish phenomenon. In the apocalyptic world of Roman occupied Jerusalem, it was the Jewish people who waited for their expected Jewish Messiah.

⁵ Randy Weiss, *Politics of Hate Crimes of Passion*, 21st Century Press, (Springfield, MO, 2008) 25-26.

Jesus never told His friends to give up Judaism. Neither did He tell them to suddenly become non-Jews. And I am not suggesting that modern Christians are legally bound to obey the Jewish laws. You won't lose your salvation by missing Passover. But why miss the blessing? WWJD--What Would Jesus Do? Jesus celebrated Passover. The Gospel account is clear and incontrovertible. The New Testament text proves that we cannot remove the Last Supper from its historical Passover setting. It is a cornerstone of the Resurrection drama.

To really understand the life of Jesus Christ, we must understand His words and actions as those of a devout Jewish man. We must grapple with the Jewishness of Jesus. The Christ of Christianity was a Jewish man in a Jewish world. Therefore, to understand the Jewish Messiah, is to deepen your Christian faith. By God's design, the early Jewish Church grew from a sect within ancient Judaism. Therefore, no Christian should ever embrace any form of anti-Semitism. Were it not for the Jewish believers in Jesus, there would be no Christianity. The Church must love and shield their Jewish neighbors from this ancient form of racism.

Christians are obliged to reflect upon the Jewish heritage of the Church. Consider the Eucharist -- our Christian communion service. If you take just one thing from this presentation, at least remember that the wafer and wine, as elements symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus in the Sacraments, was first found in the wine and *matzah* of the otherwise traditional Jewish Passover *seder*. When Jesus broke the bread, it wasn't a dinner roll. It was the *lechem oni*, the bread of affliction. It was the unleavened bread we call *matzah* that Jesus shared during His own Passover *Seder*.

The New Testament Church did not even have a New Testament. They read the Jewish Bible.

I like to tell people that if you removed the direct quotations, the paraphrases, and the Old Testament references from the New Testament, you could write the New Testament on a dinner napkin!

They obeyed the God of Israel Who declared that Passover was to be celebrated as a memorial festival,

“to the LORD; throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

(Ex. 12:14b JPS)

I don't want Christians to feel guilty about ignoring Passover for all these centuries. I just want to help believers enjoy a better anchored, more meaningful connection to God. A connecting perspective that goes all the way back to the beginning.

It's time for all believers to start at the genesis of our faith and not skip to the middle. For those of us who want to enjoy the back of the book, read the instructions at the beginning. The Passover account of our Exodus is next to Genesis for a reason.

The Church must stop ignoring the Jewish Bible or they will misunderstand the Last Supper. Most unfortunately, they may also misunderstand the last days in which we live.

The Last Supper is more than a fine piece of Renaissance art. The Passover celebrated by Jesus puts a glorious Hebraic light on God's redemption.

For Jewish people around the world, Passover is the premier symbol of God's miraculous redemption from slavery in Egypt. For Christians, it is the seminal representation of God's provision for our freedom from sin.

DAVINCI'S LAST SUPPER IMAGE.

4th QUESTION:

What's wrong with this picture?

ANSWER:

Dinner rolls—seriously? Passover is the biblical Festival of Unleavened Bread. The rolls on the table would have given everyone spiritual dyspepsia! Leonardo Da Vinci was commissioned to create The Last Supper for the Convent of Dominican friars at Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. If one looks carefully at his famous religious painting, the traditional Gentile dinner rolls will become evident.⁶ Look at the accompanying picture. I can imagine Jesus asking sadly, “What went wrong?” His left-hand points to the unacceptable unleavened bread as He wonders why the artist removed the matza from his Passover table.

⁶ Ibid. 218.

The painter appears to have substituted bread for matzah. Whether intentional or not, this error moved Jesus to a place outside the flow of Judaism. It is well known that Jews were forbidden to eat leavened bread during the time of Passover. To ignore this lowest common denominator of the festival is to ignore that Jesus was a faithful member of the Jewish community. **If Jesus can be extricated from His Jewish origins, He can be recast in any form that feels comfortable to the artist, his audience, or his sponsors. But Jesus does not change at our insistence; we change at His. God does not change; He is perfect. We must change because we are imperfect.** This may seem like an abstract philosophical concern, but it is much more. It is a fundamental truth. We must let Jesus be Jesus, a 1st century Jewish man. If we are permitted to modify Jesus to suit our bias, then we create gods of our own design and worship idols of our own creation. **Be certain that the Last Supper was a traditional Jewish Passover. To make it less is to rob Jesus of His earthly heritage.**

The artist was one of the great masters of the Christian art world. But that world was plagued by hatred, ignorance, and anti-Semitism. Sadly, that philosophical plague was transmitted through the Church. I do not blame the artist. Da Vinci was likely influenced by his sponsors. One of his later bosses was an Italian gentleman named Giovanni de' Medici. Students of Medieval Church History recognize Medici by his more famous title--Pope Leo X. Da Vinci didn't just wave when the popemobile drove by. Leonardo lived at the Vatican.

The famous painting of DaVinci's Last Supper serves as one simple example in an expose' of theological negligence. Jesus would have never allowed loaves of leavened bread on His Passover table. I have put the issue on this table so we can grapple with a problem. Some Christians poorly represent the love of Jesus because they have incorrect ideas about God's continued relationship with the Jewish people. And the history of the Church has alienated so many Jewish people that it has become exceedingly difficult to earn their interest in our Messiah. My prayer is that we will grow in grace, become better informed, and avoid repeating troublesome errors. As a Jew, I want to help my people see the love of God and distinguish Him from the pain caused by some of His misguided representatives. I am confident that my friends will do all they can to repair the damage done by those who did not understand. This Passover backstory will lead us into the Moses prequel to a Jesus Sequel. Enjoy the adventure.

Please allow me to thank you for your interest in the biblical festival of Passover. I now invite you to consider my many questions, my researched facts, and my reflective opinions. I am confident you will be well equipped to reach your own conclusions. If you have room in your life for one more old friend, I will try to be such a friend on this journey. If you will permit me, I will share my heart with you. It's a heart that's been broken by God, where required, and mended by God, as He alone could do. He did both with love. Then just for laughs, He messed with my sense of humor.

Why is this Haggadah Different From All Others?





SECTION ONE

**A TWISTED JOURNEY
TO A PASSOVER BACKSTORY**



A TWISTED JOURNEY TO A PASSOVER BACKSTORY

Each generation has certain events that cause us to mark time and take pause to remember things that changed our world. Ask a Boomer where they were when they learned that President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK) had been assassinated and we will tell you. Ask many Millennials or Gen X folks where they were on 9/11 and you will find that the nation's scar left a mark on most American's memories who understood the images of planes flying into the World Trade Center Twin Towers.

In the year 2020, dozens of nations were struck by a devastating plague of locusts. These included Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Somalia, Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Americans were not too concerned, or largely unaware of this plague. We were still able to get our food at the local supermarket. So it did not seem like a meaningful plague to us. Nevertheless, Americans will remember that year of plagues because of other chaos. Among the many tragic consequences of 2020, it will also be remembered as the year people were terrified of running out of toilet paper. Eventually, most Americans got the message about plagues. Ask anyone who was awake during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and they will be able to tell their story of how the plague brought their world to a painful, temporary halt.

I am a Jewish man. I was taught about the plagues in ancient Egypt from the time I could swallow a piece of matzah. These plagues were during the time of Moses when the Exodus occurred. Most Jews and Christians know something about Moses. They've heard of his 10 Commandments or seen the special effects that parted the Red Sea in Hollywood. Most Americans are acquainted with Jesus. Many have washed down a communion wafer with a teensy-weensy cup of wine or grape juice at church. If you are vaguely familiar with either Moses or Jesus, you might enjoy the bumper sticker comparison:

“JESUS SAVES—MOSES INVESTS!”

This book won't define the distinctions between Jews and Christians. Instead of building walls to enshrine the conflicts between Judaism and Christianity, this work will investigate some of the similarities. Moses was a Jewish redeemer sent by the God of Israel. Jesus was also a Jewish redeemer sent by the God of Israel. The connection between ancient Judaism and modern Christianity begins at Passover. This Jewish holiday of Passover was also celebrated by both Moses and Jesus. You see, we do share much in common.

The Last Supper was really the last Passover meal of Jesus. The Christian sacrament of communion is based on the wine and unleavened bread (*matzah*) that Jesus shared with his friends on His last night as a free man. He gave precise instructions about the symbolism of His body and His blood being remembered through the communion wafer and wine taken by believers.

If you know a few of the old Sunday School stories about these two Jewish heroes, *Mazel Tov*--congratulations! You are officially ready for the Moses prequel. I will make you two promises about this book: before we're done, I will teach you the absolutely most effective prayer I've ever learned, and I will also tell you the greatest excuse on earth. This excuse is the best ever given by anyone at any time. Making it more juicy, the winning excuse was given for one of the most epic failures in history.

Until the judges deliver the envelope announcing the winner, I've provided a short list of runner-up excuses for your review before we journey on ahead.

The breakup happened because . . .

1. *"I just can't be with someone who liked Sharknado."*
2. *"Please excuse Tommy from school today. He has diarrhea and his boots leak."*
3. Joe owes Tony money. His payment is late. Joe's excuse, *"I'll pay you next week. I'm expecting a full refund from the artist for my wife's tattoo."*
4. In the Galilee region of Israel there is a predominantly Muslim town called Cana. A young rascal there was pulled over for drunk driving. The officer saw his open bottle of wine and began writing a ticket. The young driver said, *"Officer, I'm not drunk! This is just a bottle of water."* The officer chuckled and continued writing his ticket saying, *"It's wine and you're drunk!"* In surprise, the drunk looked and gave this excuse:

“Jesus! He did it again.”

5. *“Honest boss, I was on my way to work with plenty of time. But the train had a flat.”*

Can we all agree that the 1st runner-up excuse was good but incomplete? There were six Sharknado films. We can argue about which one was the best. But to call it quits without a more meaningful explanation is just plain wrong. Right? Even if you’re not a Sharknado fan, this prequel will provide new information that you’ve probably never considered. The goal is to uncover hidden facts, provide inspiration, and be marginally entertaining. Plus, I hope you’ll enjoy:

RANDY’S 4 RULES OF THEOLOGY

On this leg of our Passover journey, we will explore facts to help us trust God more faithfully. Yesterday’s walk of faith was amazing and brought us this far. But tomorrow’s challenges will require new steps of faith. Yesterday’s manna was exactly what we needed yesterday.⁷ **Today’s hunger won’t be satisfied with yesterday’s manna!** We must look beyond the familiar spots we used to pick up our daily dose of heaven’s bread and secure new manna for today’s spiritual nutrition.

⁷ Manna was the world’s first “miracle grow” food. The Jews planted nothing, yet manna showed up on the ground six days a week. God provided this miracle food for the children of Israel while they wandered in the desert for forty years. If you read the Bible, you will learn that in addition to keeping them on a well-balanced diet of manna, more manna, followed by a little more manna, it also provided the travelers with a forty-year warranty on their sandals. Following God was a walk of faith and miracles! Looking for excitement? Follow God!

New manna will help us be more thankful for yesterday's manna. God wants us to be more prayerful today and more hopeful about tomorrow. No matter how bad one's circumstance might be, thankfulness and prayer must bookend each step of this adventure with God. He knows us. He loves us.

When we come to God with our messy situations, He doesn't say, "Oh snap—it's you again!"

God wants us to stay in close communication with Him on our journey. There's no floor show, no cover charge, and no false promises in this prequel. A bit of my personal story will be thrown in for context. I'm just a guy who loves the Lord. I'm also a very needy guy. No worries, I don't need anything from you. You can't help me. I need the Lord. I'm not ashamed to be desperate for God. I mean really . . . I really, really need the Lord. If you think you don't . . . wait awhile, you will.

The things that I'm pursuing in life are doomed to fail if God doesn't show up. You might ask, "*What kind of a terrible plan do you have?*" It's not a terrible plan; it's an enormous, impossible plan. I don't know your plans. But if your plan is so puny that you can easily accomplish it without God, get a new plan. **You set the bar too low.** You underestimate your managing partner if God is in control of your life. God wants to set people free and reach the world. **I call it God's salvation plan of the ages.** That's a big plan.

You may have heard it said that, “*Hope is not a strategy.*” I agree. Hope is not enough when you need divine intervention for success. Hope is important. Hope empowers us.

But hope must gain its energy from something beyond our imagination.

A believer’s hope must be grounded in the source of his/her belief. Hope, like faith, can be lost in a storm if it is not anchored to something immovable. When you hope in God, it’s OK to expect a miracle.

If a miracle is the only strategy to reach a goal God has set for you, expect a miracle.

Miracles were always God’s plan for the Passover journey. A need for miracles does not frighten God. He’s got the juice to get things done. But if we are journeying along with God, we must know our call and know our God. We must also accept our call and obey the leading of God. If not, we can’t expect raw faith to work. Misplaced faith, like disobedience, leads to failure.

I’m focused on miracles because I need one. In my current undertakings, I cannot succeed without God. Proceeding like the Lone Ranger is a doomed exercise.

Faith declares: *I cannot fail with God.*

Wisdom declares: *I cannot succeed without Him.*

Therefore, I don’t take success personal. I don’t take failure personal. I only take obedience personal.

Most readers do not know me. Neither is there a need to know me to learn about Passover. At this moment, I'm writing a simple book, serving a simple ministry, leading a simple family, running a simple business, working at simple tasks, and I'm just trying to keep it simple. Like some of your lives, sometimes my life loses simplicity and feels chaotic. The one personal decision that gives my life order is the choice to study the Scriptures. I want to influence you to yield more time to the Bible.

I'm really blessed to commit time to Bible study. I choose to do this. Everyone can choose to carve out some time from other endeavors and choose to seek God a little more. You can make that choice instead of another choice. There is great value in such an exchange. For example, it's a good trade to take some time away from reading the opinions of angry people who don't love you on social media and exchange it for a little more time with Moses, Paul, and Jesus. The old song is still true. "*Jesus loves me, this I know,*" and He won't insult me on social media. Ultimately, if you ignore Jesus, He will flame you . . . but never on social media.

I am desperate. If you are like me, sometimes you are a little desperate too. The time spent pursuing God will provide the greatest results. He is not hiding. He is not distant. He's given you His private contact information and He'll take your call. God is a better listener than a bartender and a greater therapist than you'll find in the Yellow Pages (does anyone even remember the Yellow Pages?). If you must choose between God and the tiny screen on your cellphone, God won't spam you or send unwanted pop-up ads. Choose God and the Good News. Reduce your consumption of fake news.

My life is like a Passover *seder*. I have recollections of suffering. I recall God's miracles in my life. Like a full Passover experience, milestones are discussed to help the next generation follow a path that points to God. Like a *seder*, my life is full of questions. I remember what God has done to bring us this far. But I need Him again today. Will He show up? Will He be on time? We've all heard it said that God is never late. But in my experience, He rarely chooses the opportunity to show up early and miss the drama. So, life presents us with struggles. You may have some you are battling through today. Tomorrow will present even more. Next week or next month will certainly provide struggles not yet considered. And then there is always, next year in Jerusalem?⁸

You have questions too. You have struggles just like me. You have dreams, doubts, fears, and you also lead a full life. Do you cling to God? Do you take your biggest questions directly to Him? Just like a Passover *seder*, you should not move on to the next question without answers. Sometimes, the answer is a hard one, like "wait."

For the record, my questions are not "Why?" You know, like "Why Me? I didn't deserve that kind of horrible treatment." Or "Why not me? It's not fair. He/she didn't deserve that blessing. It was supposed to be mine." Those things sound like *why-ning*. I don't want to be a *why-ner*. Too much "why" leads to whining. Who wants to be a whiner? Whiners are everywhere. Old people whine, young people whine, married people whine, single people whine, kids whine, parents whine . . .

8 During every *seder*, this is spoken at the closing prayer of the Passover celebration.

**All this whining makes me wish Jesus would
turn our whine into shine.**

We need God to shine a new light on our challenges so we can overcome them and rejoice. He did! His prophets, priests, kings, and apostles shared that light in written form. And we can reflect a little of that light with His help. Then we can do as the children's song instructs. "*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.*"

This little light of mine is now going to shine on a mysterious lady with a name nobody remembers. If you met her at a convention, you'd not recognize her. By the time you stepped over to the next booth or got in line for a cup of coffee, you'd likely have forgotten her. Her name tag would say "Jochebed." You might not even care about her or her strange name. This gal had problems. Sure, we all have problems. But if you had a chance to swap your problems with her problems, you would suddenly appreciate your situation in life much more. And you would definitely whine much less. That sort of mental exercise might be helpful.

How often have you been in a group and listened to folks complaining and thought, "I'm glad I don't have their problem? Their grief is something I could not carry. That load is just too heavy. I couldn't stand that pain." Conversely, sometimes you may wonder why another person is complaining about a problem that seems petty or inconsequential. The fact that you may be able to carry a heavy load and another winces under a seemingly light burden does not justify your criticism. It is not the burden that causes a weaker friend's complaint. It is the pain. Do not measure anyone else by your ability or strength.

Remember, it is not the weight one carries; it's the pain one bears that evokes the cry of a damaged soul.

Consider their infirmity, wound, or scars before you demean or discourage a weaker friend. Or better yet, lend a hand. I think God cares for the weakest and most vulnerable among us. Do we? And when we see those who carry a burden so crushing that it causes us to look away, remember to pray for them, lend a hand, and give thanks for your condition in life.

Are you in a stressful situation where are you feeling challenged beyond your comfort level? Look up.

Are you being tested? Rejoice! It means you are being prepared to live with greater faith, greater purpose, and greater victory.

If you are strong, you are being trained to be stronger. Deep down inside, you know that for the strong to be strengthened, heavier weights are eventually required. Only the weak can expect light tests. The mighty need tremendous challenges to be trained for remarkable victories.

Epic battles are not always fought by epic heroes. But without giants, how could you be certain of your purpose in God's call?

If Goliath hadn't showed up, David may have remained a shepherd instead of becoming a king. If transcending mediocrity were easier, everyone would move beyond average. But gaining

maturity in faith demands stretching our immature faith. Maximizing the potential that God sees in us, is not always easy. So, buck up mates. If you feel like you have problems, don't waste them. Make the most of what you are facing. Take notes so you don't forget what you will learn. And give thanks. In everything, try to find the path to give thanks. In the dark moments that I see God's hand in my challenge, I see light.

Those are the moments I am thankful for my problems. Those are the times I realize my problems are not that bad and I become thankful for my problems. Thankfulness is something we need to practice. If we threw our problems in a big pile on a table and, if mysteriously, it turned into a swap meet, . . . I'd keep my own problems. Especially if Jochebed was in the room.

Whatever your immediate problem is, I must ask, "*How bad is it . . . really?*" Some people have serious needs. Some are facing serious, tragic problems. Not everyone takes them to God. Remember, God never looks at us and says, "*Oh snap, it's you again?*" He's not like your friend who painfully tolerates listening to your problems and then acts like a hero because he waited a few minutes before he interrupted you or changed the subject. Take your problems to God. He cares. He's involved. God wants to be invested in our circumstances. If we fail to bring him into the middle of our struggle, that ding is on us, not on God. So, I ask, "*Have you really prayed about it?*"

**Prayer needs to go past whining.
Complaining misses the mark with God.**

Don't call it prayer if all we do is sanctimoniously whine and complain so we can end our diatribe saying, "in Jesus' name—Amen."

God wants us to give thanks. God wants us to pour our heart out to Him. God wants to catch our tears in a bottle and tenderly receive our broken hearts (PS. 56:8).

God wants us to count it all joy. He wants us to rejoice--even in tribulation. I'm not saying I've mastered it. I'm just saying we should. Otherwise, we're sort of looking up to heaven and shaking our finger in God's face. Can you rejoice? *Or are you sort of looking up to heaven saying,*

"Big Dude in the sky somewhere . . . you don't know what you're doing. If you did, my situation wouldn't be so messed up."

Quit that! God does know what He's doing. So, I ask again, "*How bad is it . . . really?*"

Admit it, sometimes small, near meaningless things rob us of our joy. We let some foolish things get us down. Inconsequential nonsense can discourage us, frustrate us, or cause anger to rise in our minds. This is mind control. It blinds us to God's big picture. Sometimes, a little unexpected bump in the road, or just an unhappy thought that gains traction, can turn a good day into a bad day. If we allow the wrong thoughts to take up residence, they can create a long sadness. That kind of sadness

can ruin a day, it can ruin a week, it can even become the start of a negative phase of life. Do not let that self-inflicted form of damaging mind control happen. Don't be unwise. Refuse to allow rotting discontent to take root. Instead, be wise and circumspect. Let's control our minds before depression takes control. I'm not pointing at you. I'm writing from personal experience.

Avoid the 3-D's. Allow me to explain: a simple disappointment can turn into discouragement. Discouragement is sticky. And discouragement invites depression to the pity party. Then it gets really icky. Don't give any of those things your private number.

Remove ***disappointment, discouragement, and depression*** from your guest list and block them from all your accounts.

Then think before you whine!

Maybe you've never been depressed. Maybe you have better mind control and better control over your tongue than most people. I want to learn to have better control over my thoughts and over my tongue. And when I hit a bump, I want to think before I whine. Sometimes a bump in the road is supposed to slow us down a little. That speedbump might help us avoid being carnage on the side of a road. If we slowdown a bit in response to a bump in the road, we might avoid careening headlong into a sticky, icky mess. If we can train our minds to change our thoughts when the wrong ones are infiltrating, we can preserve an attitude that honors the Lord instead of dishonors the Lord.

My wife gets tired of hearing it from me, but I often repeat one of my sayings, “*Honey, you’ve got to change the channel in your head.*”

I only know that because I must often change the channel in my own head. It requires a conscious effort to intentionally think a different thought. Changing the channel doesn’t happen by itself. It requires intentionality and self-control.

**There is no remote control for changing
the channel in your head.
It requires taking full control.**

Ruminating on fatalistic ideas or bad memories is inviting an enemy invasion into your headroom. No one has sufficient vacant space there to remain happy, sane, and productive if that sort of nasty, negative tenant is allowed to set up shop. Sometimes, we just need to kick the invaders out of our heads, get rid of them . . . intentionally think about something else. Don’t let discouraging thoughts escalate into worry, anger, or fear.

**Vision vampires suck the energy and
enthusiasm from our dreams.**

I understand that if the situation is really painful, or the challenge more significant than a bump in the road, we need more of God’s help. When we’re in the pit of a challenge worse than hurt feelings or mere disappointment, the pain can be harsher. We must still learn to give thanks and pray. Because the fastest train away from Depression Station is the Thanksgiving Express.

“*How bad is it . . . really?*” How much worse could it be? Don’t you hate it when someone says, “*You know, it could be worse.*” That’s not what you want to hear, right? Certainly, it could be worse. Who cares? We don’t want it to be worse. We want it to be better. Is there any comfort in, “*It could be worse?*”

Yes. Really, it could be worse. We should be thankful that it’s not worse. Give thanks. It could be much, much worse. Let me ask, has the President of the United States ever issued an executive order forcing us into perpetual slavery? There’s not been an edict out of Washington that says, “*I own you.*” There’s not even a hint of it in the 74,000 pages of the IRS Tax Code. No one in charge ever said, “*You are now subject to backbreaking, never ending, manual labor for the pleasure of your President.*” This all probably sounds silly. But it could be worse.

There has never been a presidential executive order that said, “*Your life now belongs to me. By the way, I will also decide if your children will live or die.*” Some people may be unaware of China’s “One Child Policy” that lasted for 35 years. Only recently have Chinese families been allowed to consider a second child. Nobody knows how many baby girls were killed because they were not as valuable to the government, or their families, as little boys. It should have been unconscionable. Nevertheless, international abortion factories continue the slaughter. Thank God, thus far, no American leader has ever arbitrarily decided to slash one half of the newborn population or wipe out all new baby boys.

**YET, THAT WAS THE PRECISE SITUATION PRESENTED
IN THE PASSOVER BACKSTORY!**

So, I ask again, “*How bad is it . . . really?*” Do the funny names Shiphrah and Puah ring any bells? They were Jewish midwives introduced in the first chapter of Exodus. Because they are women, they are not typically mentioned at Passover. We should change that tradition. These two Jewish ladies are Passover heroes who should be celebrated! They were the first pair of successful anti-abortion activists. They resisted authority. They risked their lives in a form of civil disobedience that deserves a bronze monument to be built somewhere in some city plaza. Pharaoh called them to the palace and decreed an executive order. He demanded they begin performing late-term abortions on Jewish baby boys at the very moment of birth. As soon as the sex of the infant was determined, they were ordered to kill the boys. This pair of early pro-life superheroes ignored the evil decree and violated the King’s direct orders. Instead of dying for their disobedient behavior at Pharaoh’s hand, they were rewarded by God’s hand.

“But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.” (Ex. 1:17)

Then they lied when Pharaoh asked why the male children continued to proliferate.

“So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the

male children alive? And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them." (Ex. 1:18-19)

These women willfully disobeyed the king and crafted a false narrative to cover their disobedient behavior. Their actions were brave, foolhardy, and blessed! They were rewarded by God with their own families.

"Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them." (Ex. 1:20-21)

I believe it is worth repeating. God blessed those first pro-life advocates who risked much to stand against murdering infants. Sometimes, such civil disobedience is virtuous.

My friends, this is the world into which Moses was born. The absurd, theoretical presidential executive orders I mentioned above were well understood by the Jews of ancient Egypt. That was their world. That was the decree that faced all newborn Jewish sons and their mothers. *"How bad was it . . . really?"* If you were born into that world . . . it got really bad!

Remember, in that world, the Jews were slaves. The Jews were forced into never ending, backbreaking, manual labor because an executive order was issued that said, *"Do it or die!"* Moses was doomed. A governmental decree sealed his fate on earth. That powerful force legislated the death of Moses at birth. The family of Moses was literally hopeless, helpless, subject to a heartless, godless system bent on the destruction of Moses.

“*How bad was it . . . really?*” You may be tired of that question. OK, I have a better question. The one I really want to ask you is, “*What good could come out of that horrifying situation?*” Perspective is powerful. It alters how we think about our **challenges** and **opportunities**. Those two words are underlined for a reason. Perspective changes how we see things. I drive some folks crazy when they ask me how I’m doing? I have crafted a very standard response that I really believe.

When folks ask me how I’m doing, I tell them,
“I have plenty of challenges and opportunities to trust God.”

It’s true!

I don’t want problems. You don’t want problems. But if we choose to honor God and live by faith, we’d better be up for the challenges. If the mountains that stand between us and the fulfillment of our dreams are viewed as problems, we’re probably not going to achieve our dreams. But if we know that God has birthed our dreams, the mountains are mere challenges for God to help us overcome. Each mountain between me and my dream is a new opportunity to watch God do His stuff. He wants to show me and the world His awesome power, grace, and love. Challenges are opportunities to experience the will of God at work. When we encounter mountains, expect God to do one of three glorious things:

1. **Move the mountain.**
2. **Teach us the best spot to tunnel through.**
3. **Or strengthen us to make the hike up and over.**

Before we can make peace with our problem, something needs to change. We need to change the channel in our heads. If we tune in to the channel on which God is transmitting, we can receive inspiration, wisdom, and His direction. Before we can see our problem as a challenge, we need to stop whining about our problems. We need to turn the dial and get tuned in to the frequency where we can hear what God wants us to think. His channel is where we will learn specific instructions that will guide our steps on this walk of faith. Changing the channel in our head is the only way to hear God's Words of hope. It is the best alternative to being tied in knots over the voices of doom and gloom. Those voices create fear, and they take the fun out of our journey. The journey of Moses was not fun, and it certainly was not easy.

Spoiler alert—Moses won; Pharaoh lost!

By the time Moses led the entire Jewish population out of Egypt, he must have been blamed for crushing the Egyptian economy, decimating the Egyptian agricultural system, destroying most of the Egyptian livestock, and killing off enormous numbers of the Egyptian male population (plus he will always be remembered for drowning the Egyptian military). Ask yourself one question: After robbing the Egyptian nation of all their slaves and ending their windfall of profits from that slave labor, what were the odds of the Egyptian people rewarding Moses and enriching his revolutionary mob of runaway slaves? Moses essentially blasted Egypt back into the Dark Ages. Moses must have had more enemies in his homeland than any man in history. If Egypt had any social media, Moses received more negative comments, more bad reviews, he was unfriended by

more people, and he had more enemies than any of us. Yet we are pretty quick to whine and complain when our friends give us reason, or our enemies give us heartburn.

In case you never finish reading this book, I want to encourage you right now. You need to know that even your adversaries can help you win. Leave your enemies in God's hands and He can cause them to bless you in spite of themselves. God was so confident in His plan for the Israelite slaves that he told Moses,

“Tell all the men and women of Israel to ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold and silver jewelry.”
(Exodus 11:2 TLB)

And the crazy Egyptians gave them everything they requested. The Egyptian people enriched the former Israelite slaves at their own personal expense. And through a miracle I have never heard discussed, Moses (who was the public figure and “staff” conductor over Egypt's destruction) became a rock star. He was revered like a national hero.

“Moses was a very great man in the land of Egypt and was revered by Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptian people alike.” *(Exodus 11:3b TLB)*

That should have been utterly impossible! But it proves that God can turn your worst day into your most glorious. If you entrust all the minutes and hours of your days at God's disposal, He can transform your whole life into a receptacle for blessing and favor. Before Moses left Egypt,

“God caused the Egyptians to be very favorable to the people of Israel.” (Exodus 11:3 TLB)

The enemies of Israel were no longer a problem. God turned them into a blessing for Israel. The Israelites left with Egypt’s gold and silver. And they left in style. Israel marched off wearing Egypt’s designer label clothes too. The Egyptian enemies of Israel ***“gave the Israelites whatever they asked for. So they stripped the Egyptians of their wealth!”*** Your enemies are no more challenging, your reputation no more damaged, and your prospects are no bleaker than those of Moses.

From the time of his birth, Moses was doomed. But as we know, his story ended very differently than Pharaoh envisioned. God crafted an entirely new conclusion. Moses showed the world a miraculous new perspective. God revealed new strategies. He provided the tools to change lives. Having God’s perspective can even change reality!

By the way, reality is not all that it’s cracked up to be. Some realities are false. A simple woman, the mother of Moses, rejected one of those false realities. The reality of a Jewish pregnancy under Pharaoh’s rules required infanticide. How could she intentionally destroy her newborn son? Her reality wouldn’t allow such behavior. Her heart cried, *“No! I’m a mommy—not a murderer.”* She had a name. It was lost to most folks because few know the name of the mother of Moses. We know much about his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam. We know a bit about his father-in-law Jethro and his wife Zipporah. His father’s name is Amram. He made it into some genealogical accounts because Jews tracked family descent through the father’s lineage. The father of Moses is easy to locate in the biblical records. His

mother's name is more obscure. Her name was Jochebed⁹. In Hebrew it meant "God is glory." Some translations shorten it to "God's glory." I like that because Jochebed, the mother of Moses, mirrored the love of God. And God's love is an awesome display of His glory.

Jochebed was a mommy in a much more real way than she was a slave in Egypt. That Mommy rejected Pharaoh's decree. At least she refused to give up her reality to comply with Pharaoh's. The King of Egypt was living in a fear-based reality of his own making. Pharaoh was afraid that the sons of the Jewish mothers would someday revolt against Egypt. That was his fear. It formed his reality and informed his decisions. His fear drove him to issue the decree violated by the midwives. It caused him to establish the executive order, *"Drown the Jewish baby boys! I don't want them growing up to revolt and turn against Egypt."*

To the Jews who believed Pharaoh's reality, Moses should have simply been drowned. How many mothers killed their baby boys because they believed the reality of a king's decree? Pharaoh was right. His fear was realistic. It sounds strange, but in spite of the fact that the Hebrews were God's people, **It was God Who, "let them grow stronger than their enemies."**

It was God's doing!

"He made the Egyptians plan hateful things against them" (Psalm 105:24b-25b CEV)

9 Number 26:59

Pharaoh had reason to be angry and fearful. He was in a classic “no-win” situation. He tried to alter the outcome of his fear-based reality with a dictatorial demand. But that mommy who carried “God’s glory” could not violate her God-given, maternal reality. That mommy put Moses into the Nile river as commanded by Pharaoh. But to her credit, her reality prohibited her from drowning Moses. She gave Moses a chance to live. That was the best she could do. It was enough. She gave God a chance and He took it from there.

Mommy couldn’t control the feeding habits of hungry crocodiles. They had probably developed a taste for tender Jewish male infants left to die close to shore. Mommy had no power over the waves that might flip Moses into a watery grave. She had no real control over any outcomes. But she did have control over her decision. She refused to just drown her child. Mommy’s reality desired life. Pharaoh’s reality demanded death. What about God’s reality? His is the only reality that really matters. We must pursue God’s reality when His conflicts with ours.

Whatever the circumstance, the reality of our adversary will bend to God’s reality when God is ready.

Even the state’s reality must eventually give way to God’s. Like the Jewish midwives, we must learn to reject the world’s false realities and pursue God’s. Like Jochebed, we must see beyond the obvious and envision the divine. When the world’s reality is godless, we must pursue God’s reality in our life. That is when He brings us a heightened sense that all things are possible with God. That is when His plans, His purposes, and His power begins to upend the false realities that threaten to rob us of our

dreams, cause our failure, and crush our hope. That's when God's miracles become our reality.

The mother of Moses reached her end. I'm sure when she floated little Moses down the river, her heart was broken. It was the worst day of her life. That was when her reality finally met up with God's.

A little basket of dreams launched from the bulrushes into Egypt's Nile River sent her helpless little baby into the holy flow of God's salvation plan of the ages!

Pharaoh didn't understand he had become a bit player in the plan of God. He was a vessel created for destruction. And if we are wise, we will not judge such choices. They remain only in God's purview.

“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.” (Romans 9:22)

Pharaoh was a challenge to God's people and an opportunity for Moses to pull the curtain back and reveal the grand glory of God. Every obstacle to the plan of God is subject to the immediate and radical change that God's will reveals without anyone's approval and over everyone's objections. Until we get to the end of our reality, we are not prepared to enter God's reality.

PARENTS:

If we are not ready to place our highest aspirations for our children's lives in a shaky, tar-patched basket, and let it float down a hostile river into God's hands, don't go near the water.

But if we're ready for what's next in life as servants of God, buckle up partner. The ride gets rocky but amazing!

The Psalmist said,

“He holds our lives in his hands and he holds our feet to the path.” (Psalm 66:9 TLB)

I love that. He holds our feet to the path. I am not going off the rails! No matter how sharp the turn, or how steep the incline or decline, God is going to hold our feet to the path. We can trust God with our lives and our destiny. Don't leave home without Him. Take no leg of this journey alone. If you are pursuing God, He will hold your life in His hands. He will hold your feet on His path. You won't go off the rails. In the case of Moses, not only did Mommy's reality save the life of her baby, but God's plan enriched her life and brought redemption.

And that brings us to:

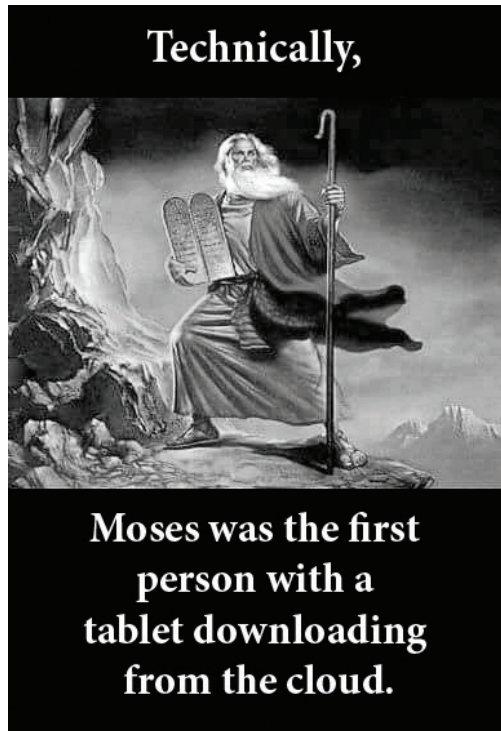
RANDY'S RULE OF THEOLOGY #1
God uses everything at His disposal to accomplish His goals.

Rule #1 is inseparable from Rule #2.

RANDY'S RULE OF THEOLOGY #2
Everything and everyone are at God's disposal.

Pharaoh's worst nightmare became his reality. He attempted to change his fear-based reality through dictatorial decree. He issued death warrants for all Jewish baby boys. He was determined to manage Jewish population control. He intended to continue using the free slave labor that underpinned Egypt's economy. What happened? Pharaoh's daughter adopted baby Moses. Just when things seemed totally off the rails, God's salvation plan of the ages came to create circumstances that revealed His plan was right on track.

Though she was not Jewish, the daughter of Pharaoh should be recognized as one of the greatest of all Passover heroes. Sadly, she is usually overlooked. That is another tradition we should change. What kind of world would we have if she had not opened her heart to baby Moses? The Bible would have been much shorter and those great Moses memes on social media would have made no sense.



Exodus does not mention her name. That is odd since Moses wrote the book. There is only one single verse, far from Exodus, in 1st Chronicles that says,

“And these were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh.” (1st Chr. 4:18b)

Of course, we can't be positive which Pharaoh in history was Bithiah's daddy. Neither can we be certain which of Pharaoh's daughters raised Moses. Her name is uncertain. Many rabbis do believe that Bithiah is the name of the Egyptian mother of Moses.¹⁰

Even if we don't know her name with certainty, we do know her character. We also know that God has a finely tuned sense of humor and a well-crafted sense of fair play. I won't say that God is a practical joker. (I don't want to get pranked by Him if He is offended by such a characterization.) You decide. Pharaoh's daughter paid the mother of Moses a handsome wage to nurse Moses. (Ex 2:9)

10 “The Rabbis found the name bat-yah to be fitting for the daughter of Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus, since she (unwittingly) realized the divine plan when she kept alive the rescuer of Israel. The midrash relates that the daughter of Pharaoh received her new name of Bithiah (bat-yah; literally, the daughter of God) from God as reward for her actions. God told her: “Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son; you are not My daughter, but I call you My daughter” (Lev. Rabbah 1:3). The verse in Chronicles served as the basis for various expositions concerning the daughter of Pharaoh. The Rabbis ask why Chronicles refers to her as “his Judahite [or, Jewish] wife,” since she was an Egyptian. They answer that Bithiah received this appellation because she repudiated idolatry (BT Megillah 13a).” <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/daughter-of-pharaoh-midrash-and-aggadah>. If additional evidence is required, Hollywood agreed with the rabbis. In the epic film, *The Ten Commandments*, it was Bithiah who found baby Moses peacefully floating down the Nile. That settles it--right?

QUESTION:

Where does the daughter of the king go for spending money?

ANSWER:

Back to daddy.

QUESTION:

Therefore, who paid for the Jewish kid to be nursed and protected?

ANSWER:

The king who had signed his death warrant. That's funny!

Jochebed would have done it for free. But God put it into the heart of the King's daughter to give her daddy's money to the mother of Moses to nurse her own baby. Then the baby, that daddy condemned, was adopted into his royal family. Moses moved into the palace, probably got his own room, a pony, and a puppy. God sat back and chuckled. Then He posted a great picture of the empty basket of reeds with a two-word Texas caption that went viral: "**BAM--Wait'Ilyaseewhatsnext!**" If you don't speak southern, ask a friend. That brings me to:

RANDY'S RULE OF THEOLOGY #3
God is good and He does all things well.

We just need to stop doubting God. **We've got to stop thinking that God is mad at us or He's out to get us!** We must quit assuming that things are not going to work out. We need to silence the failure loop playing over-and-over in our heads, "*Well, that didn't work. This ain't gonna work. Things just never work out for me.*" You all know the chorus to that song. Please

don't sing-along, "*Nobody likes me. Everybody hates me. I'm going to go eat worms.*" This is a Passover prequel. Does Walmart even sell unleavened worms?

It's time to learn the art of changing the channel in our heads because God loves us. He has a plan for our lives. He's good at what He does. And He has a reality that is far superior to the world's reality, to the government's reality, and to our own reality . . . especially if that pathetic failure loop is still playing. When we get to the end of our reality, God will transmit the details about moving into His reality. There's no promise of a pony and a puppy, but I promise that His reality is the one you want. You may not find the frequency for God's broadcasts on the channel where you watch football or your favorite televangelist. It is only heard by those who begin going directly to God. Turn to God and yearn for His Word if you intend to learn His will. Pray, read, trust. Discover His character. Fall back in love with God. He's in love with you.

We should not forget that over 400 years had slipped by while the Hebrews lived in Egypt. The call of Moses did not come quickly. Moses was not prepared to properly engage his call. He took an early stab at being the redeemer of the Hebrews but his purpose for living was not yet fully understood. He saw an injustice and attempted to repair it by killing a man. In fact, Moses was guilty of premeditated murder. Moses made sure there were no witnesses. Then he whacked his victim and hid the body.¹¹ Moses was hasty. He was violent. His character was yet undeveloped. He was a man of wealth and influence with no one to teach him about God. At that time, Moses was more

¹¹ "After looking in all directions to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand" (Exodus 2:12 NLT).

like Pharaoh than he was like God's redeemer. That shouldn't be surprising. Pharaoh helped raise Moses. He grew up in the court of Pharaoh. Moses certainly revered his adopted grandpa until the manslaughter incident sent him on the run for his life.

In the wilderness, the entire persona of Moses changed. He had a new career and a new family. He probably had a new identity. Moses found himself in a different world with a different future than he had expected. I wonder how much of his prior life was exposed to his new family. I wonder if Moses had reformatted his hard drive and erased all his dreams of an influential future. Had he wiped off every meaningful desire for significance and forgotten his former momentary feeling of concern for the Hebrews? Did sheep, sand, and survival fill his thoughts? That is my assumption. He probably lost all sense of call. What remained was a duty to fulfill the daily tasks associated with desert life to preserve his family. Moses took a long walk in a bleak place wondering what had happened to his life. Wondering and wandering changed everything for Moses. He wandered back into his destiny. Moses had an encounter with God. It was shocking for important reasons that extend beyond the physics of fire. After all, who was God? Did Moses know God before his burning bush encounter? Did he believe God had any remaining connection to the Hebrew slaves he had left in Egypt? Though some may disagree,

It seems to me that neither Moses nor the nation of Israel were close to God. Until the Exodus, there really was no nation of Israel! So, God must have seemed very distant to Hebrew slaves.

God was not well-known to the slaves in Egypt.¹² Moses understood the confusion that would occur if he visited the Jews of Egypt with a message from his long-forgotten God that suddenly popped out of a burning bush. The question Moses asked God was not rhetorical. It was genuine and practical.

“If I go to the people of Israel and tell them that their fathers’ God has sent me, they will ask, ‘Which God are you talking about?’ What shall I tell them?”

(Exodus 3:13 TLB)

Neither was God known in the palace of Pharaoh. When Moses told Pharaoh to release the Jews, Pharaoh’s answer was profoundly clear. Who is Jehovah?

“I know nothing of this so-called God.”

(Exodus 5:2 Message)

¹² In the rather obscure text of 1st Samuel 2:27, a mysterious prophet tickles the fancy of ancient rabbis. They scrounged for nonexistent hints about the identity of the anonymous oracle who confronted Eli, the priest. This one cryptic message referenced God revealing Himself to Aaron while still living among the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. Yet nothing is known of the content or context of the proposed contact. The inclusion of the text in Samuel’s writing was certainly directed against Eli’s wicked sons, not as a pre-exodus history lesson.

You see, at that point in Jewish history, God's connection to Moses and the Hebrew slaves is a bit mysterious. God had made a specific covenant with Abraham. That arrangement was extended to Abraham's son Isaac. Later, it was expanded to include Isaac's son Jacob and his family. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Israel had twelve sons. The promise made to great-grandpa Abraham flowed to the people who became known as the 12 Tribes of Israel. They landed in Egypt and settled into a fantastic arrangement under the care of Joseph (Jacob's favorite son). Joseph had arrived in Egypt under horrible personal circumstances.

Joseph's story, in a thumbnail version, was that he had ten older brothers. Joseph was his father's favorite son.¹³ His brothers were jealous of the favor and benefits shown to Joseph. And Joseph did not help himself by telling the family he had dreams that someday they would all bow down to him. His brothers threw Joseph into a pit and talked about killing him. Joseph begged his brothers to end the bad joke. He may have initially thought it was just a prank. But this was not just another big brother story of little brother getting a cosmic wedgie. They actually faked his death and sold Joseph as a slave to some passing traders. And that was how Joseph ended up in Egypt. BTW, Joseph was not a whiner; he was a winner. Be like Joe. It worked out pretty great for him.

Joseph rose to power quite unexpectedly. His was the classic rags-to-riches story. It was a contorted, painful, crooked, unfair journey to greatness. Through the unparalleled success of Joseph's leadership, the nation was saved from starvation and Pharaoh became famously wealthy. An amazing reversal of

13 See Genesis 37:3-4, 26.

fortune story unfolded in Joseph's life. But all good things came to an end. When the favor curried by Joseph ended, the Jews were soon enslaved by a later Pharaoh. After 430 years, Joseph was just a bag of bones. (Actually, he was mummified like his father Jacob.)¹⁴ The Hebrews had become Egypt's perpetual slave class. God heard the cries of His people in bondage. Cue the *matzah* for Passover.

The fulcrum of Christianity is the Resurrection.

What about Judaism?

The fulcrum of Judaism is the Exodus at Passover.

It was through the Exodus that the nation of Israel came into being. God transitioned from having a relationship with the family of Israel (Jacob) to a relationship with the entire nation of Israel. This work examines the path Moses took to greatness. It was not a straight path to glory. Moses went from being a condemned baby, to Egyptian royalty, to murderer, to exiled criminal, to shepherd, to plague-*meister*, to wagon master, to navigator of the Red Sea (without a boat or bathing suit!), to recipient of the 10 Commandments, to Manna Man, to famous author of 5 best-selling books, to buried without a gravestone, to eternal glory.

14 "Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days" (Genesis 50:2-3). Before Joseph died, he spoke prophetically to his people and demanded a promise. They "took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.' So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt" (Genesis 50:26).

His resume` was impressive. But his career path was fitful and spasmodic. By the time Moses married and became a shepherd, he had lowered his career expectations.

Moses quickly outgrew his temporary, left-wing fixation of identifying with the Jewish slave class. He had transcended a desire to help the underprivileged and had actually joined the ranks of the underprivileged.

During his brief, failed, mid-life redeemer phase, Moses had acted impetuously and taken matters into his own hands by killing an Egyptian taskmaster. His motive was sincere, but he had no plan, and he had no God. When the Jews responded negatively, the younger, thin-skinned version of Moses escaped to anonymity. His failed attempt to play the part of a deliverer caused his right-wing ruling family to cut ties. Moses discarded the “call of God” and he also tried to forget his previous privileged, entitled, elitist lifestyle among Egypt’s most fashionable upper crust social class. He probably was horrified to see himself as a man with a fascinating past but a bleak future.

How many of us fail at our “call of God” when we act impetuously? How many of us regret taking God’s matters into our own hands? If we depend on our natural strengths to accomplish something that requires spiritual giftings, failure is inevitable. Spiritual endeavors require instructions from God.

Do you ever get tired of doing right things the wrong way?

How many of us get worn out doing God's work in our own way?¹⁵ Each of these questions point us to one conclusion. Without God, we are in trouble. The only path we should pursue is to humble ourselves and yield to God. Moses was done with the spiritual stuff. God was not done with Moses.

The "Burning Bush" story of Sunday school fame depicts Moses minding his own business. He was in the sheep business by that time. Egypt was in his rearview mirror. He was at a non-descript spot in a big wilderness when a bush caught fire and talked to him in a softly thundering voice. God spoke to Moses from a shrub that appeared to be on fire with a deep echoing voice for radio. Most of that is true. In my recent review of the biblical details, God revealed new information to me that forced me to reevaluate the Sunday school account. And no mention of God's tonal quality was described. But I'm pretty sure He had the vocal pipes of a late-night FM jazz radio DJ. The NIV translation clarifies that Moses was

"at the far side of the wilderness." (Ex 3:1)

That is like saying Moses had moved the flock to that *you-can't-get-there-from-here* place in the desert. The NKJV calls it, "*the back of the desert.*" It made me wonder why Moses was so far removed from whatever he was so far removed. Was there no

15 Hebrew 4:12 ***"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit.*** Until God revealed Himself and His Word to Moses, I believe Moses was led by what was from his soul instead of that which was birthed by God's Spirit. And that was why Moses had been pretty ineffective in his first run at being a redeemer. The same can be said of most of us still operating in the soul realm uninspired by God's Spirit.

grass closer to his father-in-law's camp? Moses saw the strange bush burning without being consumed by the fire. When the bush began telling Moses about holy ground and going barefoot for the performance, things got weird. I believe God had finally gotten the full, undivided attention of Moses. Then God gave Moses a do-over. His divine assignment as a redeemer was reissued with God's special validation. We all know the story. But the God of the bush recently fired it up all over again for me. His light provided me with an entirely new understanding that I am passionate about explaining to anyone familiar with the famous details. I believe a hidden miracle lives in the backstory.

Moses did receive an incredible "call" from God. Moses didn't want it. He had changed his address from the palace to a tent. Moses didn't want a do-over. He couldn't face the pain of failure again. In his head were images of a murdered taskmaster, angry slaves, and a failure loop was playing, *"That didn't work before. This ain't gonna work now. It never works out for me."* Even the famous missing Passover chorus was heard, *"Nobody likes me. Everybody hates me. I'm going to go eat unleavened worms if I can find a Walmart with an ethnic Jewish section."*

Moses may have been afraid and confused about what God intended. Moses had been up close and personal with the unquestioned authority of Egypt's king. He knew the tremendous power of Pharaoh and the utter helplessness of the slave population. And Moses may not have understood that God did not intend to fix a bad government or create a regime change. God's plans often transcend politics and focus on long range, eternal matters. That is why our short term, temporal concerns often seem to conflict with God's will. God had a master plan that was beyond human comprehension. The words and attitude

of Moses revealed that he did not believe God could use him to achieve God's goals.¹⁶

Instead of going "all-in," Moses went "all-out." Before God had finished his message to Moses, he may have already been working up a quick list of pathetic excuses. Inside his head, the loop was probably replaying a dead taskmaster scene followed by a flashback to insubordinate, judgmental Hebrew slaves cursing him. But God didn't want Moses to personally solve the slave problems of Egypt. God just wanted Moses to be a messenger. His call was to simply take a telegram from a burning bush to Pharaoh and to his fellow Hebrews. However, even that limited assignment likely caused Moses to begin playing and replaying the failure loop in his head. He told God,

"They won't believe me." (Ex. 4:1 TLB)

If we believe in God, and if we want to honor Him, why do we reach the same wrong conclusions? "*God, I'd go witness and . . . I'd offer to pray for people . . . I'd testify . . . but they won't believe me.*" Who are we doubting at that point? It's not up to us what people believe or how they respond to the message. The call from God is ours to obey. We are only responsible to bring the message. Then we must leave the results in God's hands.

¹⁶ Perhaps modern believers make that same mistake. If God calls someone to a task, the power of God will be required to accomplish the task. If the believer doubts their own ability, that is a thoroughly reasonable conclusion. However, if the believer doubts God's ability, that is unbelief.

The actual message from God to His people was magnificent.
Moses was sent to declare the first emancipation proclamation!

“God is finally ending your slavery. You’re free!”

Moses showed up with the winning envelope from the Publisher’s Clearinghouse.

“You’ve won! You’re moving to a land flowing with milk and honey. It’s all good news folks.”

I guess Moses knew the people had a loop playing in their heads too. After 430 years in Egypt, all they knew was,

“It’s gonna be another bad day. Every time a day ends in ‘y’ it’s a bad day. It’s gonna be a bad day . . .”

The message Moses was instructed to deliver to Pharaoh was different. *“The slaves and I are taking a little trip. We need to go worship in the wilderness. We won’t be gone long, so don’t worry. The itinerary is short and sweet. Hike for two or three days. We’ll have an abbreviated worship service, somebody will pass the turban for a quick offering, I’ve prepared a humorous anecdote with a cute application to my message, a pithy 3-point sermon, followed by a brief altar call. Give us a couple of more days to walk back and within a week or so, I’ll have them all back at work.”*¹⁷ The appeal began as a pretty simple request to Pharaoh. Yet Moses was still afraid. His response to God’s plan revolved around his fear that nobody would believe him.

¹⁷ Exodus 3:18-19.

God tried to ease the fears held by Moses. He said, “*Okay, tell you what, I’ll crank out a few miracles; then I’ll make them an offer they can’t refuse.*”¹⁸ And at that point, I think Moses cracked. He could not handle the intensity of what God was asking.

How bad was it? Moses then said, “*Well, uh-uhh-uhhh-I-I’m-I-I-am-I’m not g-g-good at to puh-puh-puhb-public-s-sp-speaking.*” I could be wrong here. (And I sincerely mean no disrespect to people with speech impediments.) But why is it assumed that Moses really had a speech impediment before the bush flared up. Maybe he did. But maybe not? Consider a later post from God in His sequel to the Old Testament. The New Testament says Moses was taught,

“all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he became a mighty prince and orator.” (Acts 7:22 TLB)

There was no mention of a lisp, stutter, or speech impediment. God knew the fear in the heart of Moses. The thought of returning to Egypt paralyzed Moses. The alleged public speaking problem was another matter.

I’m not convinced Moses had a speech impediment. It sounded more like Moses had a spinal disorder—a missing backbone that had gotten left behind in Egypt.

¹⁸ Exodus 4:1-9.

Maybe God wanted him to return to where he had lost it so Moses could become the leader God had destined him to be. I couldn't find any record of Moses stuttering when he spoke to his wife or when he called his sheep. There were no notes mentioning a speech problem in his student file at the Egyptian prep school he attended. No stutter was mentioned at his first visit to the Jewish people or when he whacked the taskmaster. It's possible he had a problem. It's also possible if any of us heard from God through a burning bush we'd develop a nervous affectation ourselves. God wanted Moses to be His spokesperson. Much later in the story, God got what He wanted from Moses.

“And the Lord told Moses to be his spokesman to the people of Israel.” (Exodus 20:22 TLB)

There was no more stuttering excuse from Moses recorded at that time. He had his backbone back and he was healed. The failure loop in his head was erased and replaced with a new loop encouraging Moses to trust the Lord. But for now, we must return to when Moses was still barefoot at the bush.

When Moses told God to send someone else, God was perfectly prepared. (Ex. 4:13) God already had a plan. From the bush, God said, *“All right. Your big brother Aaron will go with you. He’s a good speaker.”* By the way, *“He’s coming here, and he’ll be your spokesperson.”* God systematically removed each excuse Moses raised.

In the spirit of Passover, I have another question. I don't think this question has ever been presented in any *haggadah*. “Was Aaron, God’s Plan B?” In my opinion, absolutely not! During a recent re-reading of the textual material, I finally had to ask, *“What’s going on here? What do these inferences mean?”* I think

God showed me some things that changed how I interpret the old Sunday school account.

Let's think about the timeline for this backstory. Moses had been on a long hike into the wilderness. It was described as far, far away on the backside of the desert.

- Aaron was also going to be required to march a very long way into a very, very hostile wilderness. There were no handy 7-11 stores or convenient rest stops.
- He was going to be required to find Moses without any GPS or tracking device.
- An entire generation had died off during the 40 years that Moses was hiding out, exiled in the wilderness. 40 years is a long time for a guy to be registered as MIA¹⁹ and off the grid!
- Aaron was no spring chicken. By the time he got back to Pharaoh, Aaron was 83 years old (Exodus 7:7). How many 83-year-olds launch out on a lonely wilderness hike for an indeterminate amount of time, to unknown locations, in an uninhabited desert? Approximately none.
- This family reunion between big brother and little brother took a minimum of 40 years to organize.
- I believe it was probably longer . . . closer to 80 years! Remember, Moses was Aaron's little brother.
- Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses was

¹⁹ MIA is a military acronym for soldiers Missing In Action.

just a tiny infant when this happened. Aaron was only three years old. I don't think the mother of Moses said, "Listen Aaron, there's something you need to know. I really didn't drown your brother as ordered. He's alive. And you know that kid that I'm nursing when I go to work in the morning . . . my paycheck is coming from the King of Egypt so I can nurse my son Moses. That kid is your little brother, Mo."

- How many of you know that little kids talk? Without a Twinkie or a box of Goldfish Crackers you cannot shut a little kid up. These items and the things that shut kids up are not Kosher for Passover anyway. The smart parent's rule of thumb is: "Never tell a little kid a secret if it means you die when he blabs."

I am not convinced that Aaron even knew Moses was his brother. If little Aaron would have known it and leaked it, that slip of the lip could have been devastating to their family. It suddenly dawned on me that it was in the odd realm of possibilities that Moses may not have really known his big brother Aaron until God sent him to become his mouthpiece. And that lit up a whole new idea. I finally understood the purpose of Pancho, Tonto, and Robin.

**God established the world's first ancient -
PSYDKICK HOTLINE!**

You might wonder what a sidekick does. Without some dunderhead's antics to foul things up and provide comic relief, how could we fully appreciate a superhero? Aaron was no plan B. If Moses hadn't developed a stutter, the greatest excuse in the history of mankind would have rested on the laurels of Bowser. You know, "*The dog ate my homework.*" But thank God for his plan of dynamic duos. I know Cisco, Clayton Moore, Johnny Depp, and Batman do.²⁰ BTW, most of my grandchildren know my real identity. If I'm unable to finish this book before my publisher's deadline, it's only because Gotham City needs me.

I guess it's appropriate to now crown the winner of our Best-Ever Excuse competition. It comes from a famous story on a mountain near a cliff. So, let me give you the Cliff's notes

- Moses went up the mountain to get something from God. Not knowing what a Commandment was, but liking the price sign, "Today only—FREE!" Moses said, "OK, I'll take 10."
- He hiked down the mountain with no backpack to holster his new commandments.
- When he saw what his dunderheaded sidekick had done, Moses became the first man in history to break all 10 of the commandments.
- Using a Laurel & Hardy line, Moses said, "Well . . . here's another fine mess you've gotten us into." Then

20 For those too young to remember, the Cisco Kid was a Hispanic TV cowboy (one of my favorite B&W western heroes). Clayton Moore was the original TV Lone Ranger. Johnny Depp performed what I considered to be a rather psychedelic film adaptation of Tonto, the Lone Ranger's original sidekick (portrayed brilliantly by Jay Silverheels).

our superhero asked his big brother, “How could you have possibly made this Golden Calf? What were you thinking? God is gonna kill everybody!”

- The Bible tells us Aaron suggested, “The people asked what happened to Moses who led us out of Egypt? He’s gone! Make us a god to lead us. Well, I told them, bring me your gold earrings. So, they brought them to me.”
- I am just going to read Aaron’s excuse right out of the book. There is no better way to explain what happened to the gold earrings: “***So they brought them to me I threw them into the fire and . . . well . . . this calf came out!***” (Ex. 32:24 TLB).

Ladies and gentlemen, the winner is: (a hush falls over the crowd, we hear the rustle of an envelope opening . . .) Aaron! Yes, he really said it: “***I threw them into the fire and . . . well . . . this calf came out!***”

My kids said some pretty absurd things when they were growing up. There were times I just wanted to say, “*Seriously? Did you really just say that? Really?*” And then I just laughed, because it was so outlandish. But nobody ever said anything like, “***I threw them into the fire and well, this calf came out.***” Moses was surprised. Was God surprised? No! God knew all about this from the start.

Our God had a precise plan. He’s trustworthy. God actually has a salvation plan of the ages that He has crafted with great care.

We need not act like our current little problem is a crisis that will hinder us from fulfilling our part in God's plan. It won't.

If it's God's call, it's God's problem!

Since nothing is a problem to God, in His service, we have no problems. The mountains we see are merely challenges and opportunities for us to learn to trust Him. He cares about us and our concerns. God knows how pathetic we are. His plan is not dependent on how good we are at doing the things He's called us to do. We must choose to play a new success loop that reminds us that we belong to God and His plan is fully under His control. He has called us. He will help us achieve what He wants accomplished. If we get bogged down hearing a contrary message to what we know is true, it's not from God! Change the channel in your head.

If the current channel in your head says, "*I'm too old,*" or "*I'm too young,*" or "*I'm too poor,*" *I'm too weak,*" "*I'm too married,*" or "*I'm not married enough*" or "*My kids this,*" or "*My parents that,*" . . . change the channel in your head and quit your whining. Think about Moses. Remember, it could be worse. "*How bad could it be . . . really?*"

When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after receiving the Law from God, all the wheels appeared to have fallen off the wagon train. Disaster had struck. Think about the golden calf mess. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if Moses had just said yes to God instead of requiring a sidekick. Without Aaron, would there have been a golden calf? Aaron was responsible for one of the most epic fails ever.

The golden calf fiasco may have been the dumbest stunt since Eve went off her low carb diet to lunch with a snake.

We might have missed the world's best excuse if Moses had spoken for himself. But Moses would have skipped past one of his greatest tests. God was ready to wipe out the entire nation of Israel. Moses was unaware of what Aaron had done. He was still up on the mountain with God getting the 10 commandments when God said, *“Look, while you were away, your brother and his buddies did a very terrible thing. Now I’m going to destroy them all. But don’t worry, I’m gonna start over and make a new nation. This will be a great group and you’re gonna love being the leader of this new and improved Israel2.0 version.”*

Moses didn't miss a beat. He thought of his brother and said, *“Oh God, don’t, don’t, don’t hurt him. Don’t kill him. Don’t wipe him out. Preserve them.”* That is why I believe Moses was the greatest servant/leader in all human history who had ever been born of a man and a woman. In my opinion, no better strategist or negotiator existed. When God would become angry and He was ready to wipe out folks from among His own people, Moses instinctively fell on his face before God and begged Him to save those unworthy of salvation.

*“Oh God, don’t do that. They’re Your people, You brought them out of Egypt. It would look bad for You. It’s going to ruin Your brand.”*²¹

²¹ Please don't miss the discussion of branding and brand awareness in the Epilogue. But don't skip over the rest of the book to get there. That would be out of order and quite the faux pas in a text about seder—order.

How many other leaders might have thought, “*That sounds pretty good. Kill the rascals. Let’s do this new thing! The beta version of Israel had too many bugs.*” That was not in the heart of Moses.

Some people think we Jewish folks make too much of Moses...I’m here to tell you, we don’t make enough of him!

While all the chaos was happening in the valley of disobedience and Moses was still up on Mount Sinai, I think God knew he would not wipe out the children of Israel. I believe God wanted the heart of Moses to be revealed to show the world how a humble servant/leader behaves. We needed to see a redeemer, a protector, a picture of Jesus who intercedes for us. God showed us this unique example by giving us *Moishe Rabbenu*, Moses our greatest Rabbi.

IF WE WERE ALL WISE SONS²²:

- *We would study the life of Moses.*
- *We would emulate his humility.*
- *We would pursue his wisdom.*
- *We would read and remember his Five Books.*
- *We would learn what the prophets, priests, kings, and apostles learned from, and taught about, Moses.*
- *If we did these things, we would be better parents, siblings, pastors, rabbis, bosses, teachers, and friends.*

²² Every Passover liturgy discusses the famous Four Sons of which only one is wise.

- *We could care about other people more if we learned to care like Moses cared.*
- *If we mirrored the heart of Moses, we would humble ourselves and pray for the people around us.*

The world seems to cry out for justice. When I was young, that is what I believed the world lacked. I was wrong.

Justice is too costly and will not satisfy the human heart. May God be merciful because none of us can afford justice. The oppression of true justice is unbearable. How can a sinner stand before a righteous God? If justice is served, we perish, because we are all guilty.

Moses understood that God could be merciful. Therefore, the heart of Moses cried out for mercy to preserve his brother and his sister when pride overtook them.²³ Moses cried out for mercy when the nation was moments away from being destroyed because of their idolatry.²⁴ I'm glad that Moses did not call for justice against those who had offended him. Neither should we. He did not cry out for vengeance against those who treated him disrespectfully. Neither should we. Moses depended on mercy, because he had seen the results of swift justice. When God's people disobeyed, justice was horrific. So, it will be on the final day of judgment. For those who do not know God's tender mercy, justice will be a merciless horror. Moses followed God's lead and punished those when God required examples of consequences to

23 Numbers 12:11-12

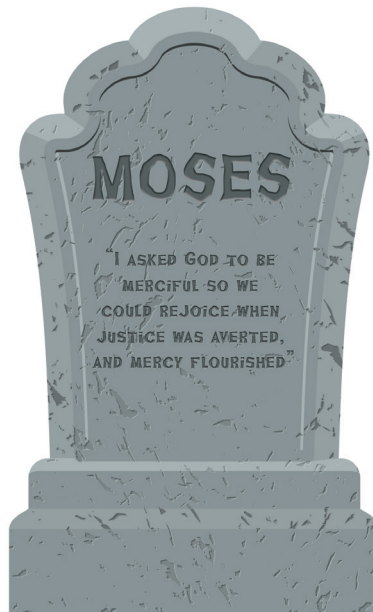
24 Exodus 32:9

warn future generations. If we fail to read his record, how will we know, understand and believe?

No one knows where Moses was buried. If Moses had a headstone, I believe his epitaph would read,

“I asked God to be merciful so we could rejoice when justice was averted, and mercy flourished.”

And as one of His people, I rejoice because I know the mercy of God. He spared me from the just judgment I deserve. Mercy does flourish and I am a grateful recipient.



This brings me near to the conclusion of this prequel section and:

**RANDY'S RULE OF THEOLOGY #4:
TRUST GOD! We're not going off the rails.**

I don't know what you're facing. I don't know how bad it is. I do know it could be worse. Remember, if we all put our troubles on the table at a swap meet, would you run and take your own, or would you pick someone else's?

If you are foolish enough to go pick up someone else's, it just means you do not know what could come next if you hold on and trust God. It could be worse. Don't think about that. Instead, rejoice! Give thanks to God for the good things that He's doing in your life. Remember the good things He has done for you. Expect more good things. We're not going off the rails. Change the channel in your head if it's not drawing you nearer to the Lord. And remember to pray.

It seems when I'm at the Red Sea and I hear the sound of hoofbeats coming up behind me, I get scared. For the third time in my life, I'm scared like that again. Being that frightened puts a fellow in a place where impetuous decisions could lead to mistakes. May God help me hesitate. May God help me wait for His miracle. May God help me believe. May God help me. I need God.

About every fifteen years, I am just forced to cry out to God and ask Him to break into my life. I tell Him He can do whatever He wants with me. Just break in. In those rare times when I've truly been ready for God's breakthrough, it only came after first reaching the end of myself. I am in that rather rare place again as I write this. If you're in that place, when nothing but a miracle will be sufficient, God must become your sufficiency. It was at times like this that I invited God into my life in a new way. In a sense, it is like leaving the door unlocked with a big sign,

“God, break into my life. Do whatever you want. The door is unlocked. Everything of value is out in the open. Nothing is nailed down. O God, break in and take what You want. Do what You want. I trust You God. I love You God. Bring Your breakthrough, if that is Your desire. But should a breaking be more productive in my life than a break-through, Lord break me tenderly. I am yours. Nevertheless, I do request a miracle break-through if you deem it appropriate. And if not, strengthen my faith to rejoice anyway in all things. I know You are good and You do all things well. BTW, thanks for allowing my life to be like Passover. I know it ends well.”

Once again, I think I am ready to give God a blank sheet of paper and invite Him to draw any blueprint for the remainder of my life that He deems appropriate. I'm really thankful for His love. That is the only reason I could promise to teach you the most effective prayer I know. No memorization is required. But you may want to jot it down in case you hear the horses coming up from behind you and smell the murky sea water ahead. Do you have a pencil? The prayer was on the sign I left out for God.

Try it.

He loves you and He's good at what He does!



SECTION TWO

**SO, YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED
IN A PASSOVER SEDER?**



SO, YOU'RE INTERESTED IN A PASSOVER SEDER?

Excellent! It proves you are wise, open-minded, and willing to consider important questions. Passover is a festival full of questions. Children ask them, adults ask them, and the answers honor God. Passover reminds all of us of His glory.

Did you know that Passover is the most celebrated festival in all the Scriptures? More was written about Passover in the Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible than any other biblical holiday!

I am the first born, only son, of a very traditional, observant Jewish family. My father came to this country in an exodus from a land that destroyed some of my relatives and most of its Jews. Passover holds special significance to families like ours.

Growing up, I was aware of the *Ta'anith Bekhorim*—the Fast of the Firstborn. This event was remembered annually on the day before Passover. Only firstborn Jewish sons were subject to this fast. The rabbis invented this fast for young guys like me. I thought a lot about the 10th plague. I was thankful for life and for freedom far from Egypt. The firstborn sons of my people were spared. Conversely, the firstborn sons of the Egyptians died. We

Jews understood the magnitude of our deliverance in comparison to the horror of those doomed in Egypt. ***Joy & sorrow existed in the parallel universes of obedience and disobedience.*** Later, the rabbis developed “workarounds” to their law and more pleasant alternatives came into being to avoid a full 24-hour fast. We will consider rabbinic “workarounds” later. For those interested in joining a *seder*, an explanation is provided.

WHAT IS A SEDER?

The Passover *seder* is the most popular ceremony of all Jewish festivals. It serves as an important teaching device to ensure that every generation has a solid understanding of God’s love. Simultaneously, we are reminded of our unique deliverance from bondage.

The language spoken by Israelis is modern Hebrew. A common Hebrew term used in everyday Israeli conversation is the word, “*beseder*.” The meaning of the word is comparable to “OK.” Things are “alright.” It is sort of the normal answer given when someone is asked, “How are you?” The answer literally means, “in order.” The same terminology describes the Passover celebration. A traditional *seder* is done “in order.”

A Passover *seder* follows a standardized order of service to be certain that each of the important details of the Exodus account are recounted with precision and not forgotten by future generations. God’s mighty arm of deliverance carried the Jewish people out of Egyptian slavery. The miracles that brought this deliverance are faithfully recounted every year.

2. TO EAT MATZAH.

Unleavened bread as stated in Ex. 12:18. "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening."

3. TO ABSTAIN FROM EATING HAMETZ - FOOD WITH LEAVEN.

This is commanded in Ex. 12:15. "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel."

**"Wait--God said Passover was to last 7 days."
Why does Passover now last for 8 days?
Because we do not want to take any chances!**

FAKE NEWS, SPOOFED MESSAGES, & FIREWALLS!

In Temple days, there was no Farmer's Almanac, no Weather Channel, and no digital phones with dates and clocks set precisely by satellite for every time zone. The New Moon was something someone saw in the sky and reported to headquarters in Jerusalem. Signal fires were lit in different areas on the highest hilltops to pass on the information that the New Moon had arrived. Certain festivals were marked based on the New Moon. Since we couldn't be sure of the exact time to begin the festival, we added a day to play it safe. That became a very important

decision. With millions of Jews living outside of the Holy land, in the Diaspora, we can be confident that the correct seven days are enveloped in the eight days of our modern celebration. But in ancient Israel, another perplexing reason created uncertainty about the timing of the New Moon and the duration of Passover.

As described in the New Testament, serious conflict existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. That conflict continued into the times when the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled near “the end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth, C.E.”²⁴ The Samaritans were apparently a sneaky bunch at that time. They sabotaged the Jewish signal fires. They began lighting signal fires on the wrong day to confuse the Jews. It worked. The Jews who saw the false signal fires had no way of knowing it was a malicious attempt to deceive those celebrating God’s Passover. They simply followed protocol and lit their own fires on the next hilltop to continue sending the news. However, the gullible fire-light messengers were unintentionally sending a spoofed message. The rabbis soon realized this chaos was being communicated.

They stopped using signal fires in the areas where the Samaritans lived.²⁵

The Samaritans may have created the first spoofed messages. But the Jews came up with the first “firewall.”

24 Jacob Neusner, *The Yerushalmi—The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Introduction*, x.

25 *Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah* 2:1 cf. 70, 71. Rabinovitz, Shaáre and Rabbi Zeira. BTW thanks Elliot.

The Babylonian Talmud wisely advised against limiting the celebration to seven days. Today, most Reform Jews celebrate only seven days. But Passover is uniformly an eight-day celebration by most Jews around the world living outside of Israel. And for that extra day of forced *matzah* eating, I guess you can just thank the original fake news bureau.

WHAT STORY DO WE RETELL?

It is fascinating to read different versions of the *haggadah* and recognize that all tell the same basic story. Civilizations have come and gone during thousands of years of Jewish history. Yet throughout the many centuries of this celebration, three non-negotiable components of Passover remain standard and consistent.

The thrust of a Passover festival is to retell the story of God's deliverance. The plot and script of the Passover drama is recounted with great enthusiasm . . . otherwise a cattle prod might be needed to wake the kids. The Exodus account must be understood as a first-person narrative. In other words, we discuss the event in the terms "*we were slaves in the land of Egypt.*"²⁶ It is imperative that all Jews personally identify with the struggle of slavery and the joy of God's miraculous deliverance. This is made clear after the liturgical segment that follows the *feer kashas*.

²⁶ Meyer Levin, *An Israel Haggadah*, (New York, Harry N. Abrams), 45.

WHO FEARS A LITTLE KASHA?

The *feer kashas* is a Yiddish term for the Four Questions. These famous four scripted questions are typically asked by a child. They are possibly the most well-known Hebrew words in the *seder* which begin with the Hebrew words *mah nishtanah*.

This reminds me of a story out of England. A British Jew was waiting in line to be knighted by the Queen. He was instructed to kneel in front of her and recite a sentence in Latin when she tapped him on the shoulders with her sword. But at that very moment, he panicked. In the excitement of being knighted, he forgot the perfunctory Latin response. Then, thinking fast, he recited the only other words he knew in a foreign language. He recalled them from his turn as a youth asking the *Feer Kashas* at his family's Passover *seder*: Without missing another beat, he declared, "*Ma nishtana ha layla ha zeh mi kol ha laylot.*" Puzzled, Her Majesty turned to her advisor and whispered, "Why is this knight different from all other knights?" (Rimshot—I'm here all 8 days folks. If you're not Jewish, I assume that was why you didn't laugh uproariously. If you are Jewish, can you show a brother a courtesy guffaw to make the gentiles think I'm funny?)²⁷

Seriously now, I do have indelible personal remembrances of my first recitation of the *feer kashas*. Perhaps many Jewish males who were raised in traditional Jewish homes can relate. My parents and grandparents were circumspect in insuring that my generation of family members understood the relevance of Passover. Each of the young male children in our *mishpochah*-family were required to take our turns at chanting the four

²⁷ The Four Questions always begin with the words translated as, "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

questions. In the year that my turn came, I approached that fateful *seder* with fear and trepidation (at that moment, I was about eight years old feeling eighty). I knew that everyone would be carefully checking for flaws in my performance. They were. Years later, I figured out that Judaism is not a spectator sport and the Passover *seder* is organized to bring everyone in as a participant. For this reason, after the Four Questions are asked, a partial answer is recited by the group. The focus of our response is to recall and declare that we were slaves in Egypt. *Avadim hayinu*—“We were slaves.” I want to consider those words from the old *haggadah* I used while growing up. (Stay tuned for more on that famous *haggadah*.) The Aramaic quote is found in a great response after the Four Questions.

“Because we were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Eternal, our God, brought us forth thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And if the Most Holy, blessed be He, had not brought forth our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and our children’s children would still be in bondage to the Pharaohs in Egypt.”²⁸

Every Jewish participant is reminded that if God had not redeemed and delivered us from *Mitzrayim*—Egypt, we would still be slaves in the land of Pharaoh. This also instills in us the understanding that God is in charge and in a personal relationship with His people. He was, He is, and He will be our Redeemer.

28 Deluxe Edition of the Maxwell House Haggadah that was commonly distributed by the General Foods Corp. in the mid 1960’s, 9-10.

“This covenantal relationship lies at the heart of the celebration of Passover. We rejoice for the past liberation from Egypt and for other redemptions by God since then. And because of the fulfillment of past promises, we anticipate at Passover the future final redemption.”²⁹

IS THAT A TEXAS CRACKER?

The 2nd mandatory element is unleavened bread--*matzah*. This is a requirement that probably everyone recognizes. As we know, it is symbolic of the unleavened bread Moses told the children of Israel to eat on their hasty escape from Egypt. Both unleavened bread and leaven will be meaningful topics of this festival.

Whether you realize it or not, products that contain any leaven are prohibited to be inside any Jewish homes during the 8 days of Passover. These forbidden products are called *hametz*—leaven.

WOULD A FEW TWINKIES HURT ANYONE?

The 3rd non-negotiable is that normal breads and baked goods are prohibited. In fact, the Jewish tradition requires a careful cleaning process to ensure that every Jewish home is *pesahdik* -- kosher for Passover. Observant Jews try to remove every trace of leaven from their dwelling. No Twinkies! Literally, not even a cookie crumb is to remain under the couch cushion. God wants our homes to be pure. He said, there shall be,

²⁹ Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1985), 7.

“no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off.”

(Ex. 12:19a)

Sounds serious doesn't it? Merely eating a bit of leaven or having a speck of pancake batter left on the stovetop was grounds for excommunication. God said they would be cut off from the Children of Israel. [Please see the apostles note on the front cover.] ☺

Is this matter relevant to Christians? Is the topic of *hametz* discussed in the New Testament? Yes! Both Judaism and Christianity symbolically relate *hametz*-- leaven to sin. The Jewish Apostle Paul specifically called immorality “leaven.” He said that

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” *(1st Cor. 5:6)*

Paul was concerned that sin would proliferate in the lives of new Christians. He warned believers in the Church of Corinth to

“Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us.” *(1st Cor. 5:7)*

Observant Jews have always recognized that the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Children of Israel in Egypt. When Christians understand the heart of Passover, the writings of Paul make more sense. Paul described Jesus as the Passover lamb. Therein Paul proposed that the blood of Jesus secured our freedom from another form of slavery . . . slavery to sin.

But what about leaven? All who believe in the writings of Paul must understand why we must remove sin, or leaven, from our lives. Before we reach the conclusion of our Passover *seder*, a final question will be posed that only you can answer.

IS THERE LEAVEN IN YOUR LIFE?

If we are honest, we all have leaven in our lives. The question is what do we do with it? One of the Jewish writers of the New Testament wrote of our leavened status as follows:

“There is none righteous, no not one.” (Romans 3:10)

King Solomon said it even clearer. Solomon wrote,

“There is not a righteous man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Eccl. 7:20 JPS)

Even Solomon wasn't completely original. He probably learned it from his father, *Daveed HaMelech* -- King David. In the 14th Psalm, David said essentially the same thing.

If one believes the Bible, we must admit that we all have leaven in our lives. We may think we can hide it. But that is an illusion.

We cannot. I think God wants it purged from our soul and the residue removed from our actions. Christians and Jews can facilitate this process by respecting each other and sharing the common ground of *Pesach*. That is the reason Passover is the perfect Jewish Connection to the Last Supper!

Passover is a bridge connecting Jews and Christians. Remember, a bridge allows traffic to travel in two directions. Let's try to make the philosophical trip toward each other so we can love and understand our differences with more grace and wisdom. Perhaps it will allow us to celebrate our divine connections with more joy.

I love Passover! It's my favorite non-turkey holiday. Those of us who are interested in Passover and things Jewish, like to become better informed about the things that interest us. You may still wonder why we make such a big deal about a 3,500-year-old holiday? I'm glad you asked.

A few years ago, I was doing a Passover presentation for a great local church in Texas pastored by Gary Osborn, a former Bible College professor. His introduction to my *seder* was the absolute best I could ever imagine. He said this won't be,

“A regular Passover celebration, but more like we're all sitting around a campfire in the Middle East while a Jewish brother tells us about the greatest cosmic rescue mission in the history of the earth.”

WHAT WAS THE GREATEST COSMIC RESCUE MISSION IN THE HISTORY OF THE EARTH?

The importance of our Exodus and Passover cannot be overstated.

- Therein redemption history took shape.
- Thereby the physical nation of Israel came into existence.
- Therefore God's covenant with the Jewish people was finally made known and they became the people of that covenant.
- God's promises then became rooted in a land that was to become the land of His people.
- Passover is a center point in redemption history. "The greatest cosmic rescue mission in the history of the earth" is revealed in the Passover account and God's salvation plan of the ages.
- As we say in Texas, "If that don't light your fire, your wood is wet."

A *seder* should transcend a religious ceremony. Passover ushers us into a redemptive event. The path of our redemption runs through the heart of Egypt and settles into the center of a *seder*.

God took us out of Egypt. He's still taking Egypt out of us!³⁰

³⁰ I don't know who first identified this condition, but all of us who have met the refiner will agree.

Yet even the failings of my people in the desert were not wasted. Paul explained the great value of Israel's trials in the wilderness that must never be lost on us.

“Now all these things happened to them as examples: and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1Cor 10:11)

We now know what the term *seder* means. And we know the meaning of *haggadah*. Perhaps it would be wise to present a concept that seems simple but is complex.

WHAT IS PESACH?

This is the Hebrew term that simply means Passover. But what does Passover really mean? Well, even that depends on who you ask. You see *Pesach* is not always called Passover. *Pesach* is also known by several other names.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In addition to the Hebrew name, *Pesach*, the holiday is also identified by other Hebrew names as follows:

- ***Hag Ha-Aviv*** - the holiday of spring.
- ***Zeman Heiruteinu*** - the season of our liberation.
- ***Hag Ha-Matzot*** - the holiday of unleavened bread.

Additionally, did you know that Passover is really like a New Year? We were standing right on the verge of our Exodus from Egypt when God declared our New Year.

“Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, “This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

(Exodus 12:1-2)

A QUICK COLLEGE COURSE IN JEWISH DATING OR CALENDARS: 101?

Odd as this may sound, the actual Jewish New Year--*Rosh Hashanah* is celebrated in the seventh month of the year. The first holiday on the Jewish calendar is always Passover. Maybe this warrants a brief lesson about the Jewish calendar.

- The Jewish calendar isn't like our secular calendar. Throughout the western world, a solar calendar is used based upon the sun.
- Muslims reckon month and year according to the moon, so they have a lunar calendar.
- The Jewish calendar (contrary to popular views) is a mix of both. Jews have 12 months of 29 1/2 days each calculated by the moon, yet the year is reckoned by the sun.
- This leaves us with an extra 11 days to take up annually. How do we adjust for this? With leap years. During every 2nd or 3rd year (7 in 19 years)


we have a 13th month which is known as the 2nd *Adar*. (Does this sound confusing? Trust me, it gets worse.)

How many New Years are recognized by most observant Jews? There was a debate in the *Talmud*: Was the world created in *Nisan*, spring, or *Tishri*, fall? The *Talmud* settled it “*You’re both right*.”³¹ I’m here to tell you that there are four Jewish New Years. (Don’t say I did not warn you. But it also gets really exciting so don’t fret!)

WE HAVE FOUR NEW YEARS!

1. The month of Passover, Nisan, begins the New Year for determining the reign of kings, as well as the actual biblical 1st month. God decreed that Nisan (Exodus 12:2) is the 1st month of the biblical religious calendar. As we celebrate our freedom from Egypt, we acknowledge the true beginning of the Jewish year and that epoch of Judaism that brought clarity to the Jewish people’s religious connection to God. As previously explained, the nation of Israel was born at Passover. Think of it like Jewish Independence Day (the 4th of July) and happy New Year all rolled into one super spiritual celebration.

31 Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1).

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2. **Elul is the New Year for tithing animals.** The Talmud presumed that most animals were born during the month of Av. The rabbis decided that the required tithe of sheep and cattle, detailed in Leviticus 27:32, would therefore be ready for sacrifice by Elul.
 3. **Shevat is the New Year for trees with the celebration of Tu Bishvat.** This was sort of the world's first Jewish Earth Day.
 4. **Tishri is the New Year--Rosh Hashanah marking the anniversary of the creation of the world.** In the secular year 2021/2022, the Jewish year is 5782.

I've learned it is unwise to assume every reader understands the intent of words selected in a book or article. Even clearly written communication can be misunderstood. Therefore, this strange format dealing with obscure material and foreign words is even more easily confused or lost in translation. Some may also be unfamiliar with the nomenclature. "Terms of the trade" can be confusing to folks not accustomed to hearing them. Even simple terms can have complex meanings. Previously, I provided the translation of the word *Pesach* as Passover. But even that may be misunderstood without a bit more explanation.

WHAT IS THE PASSOVER?

Actually, THE Passover can accurately describe four different aspects of the biblical festival of *Pesach*. It could be any of the following:

- The name of the holiday is Passover.
- It is a term to describe the paschal lamb that was sacrificed.
- A special peace offering of the festival was known by the same name.
- Passover is also the name of the festival meal.

Therefore, it is helpful to understand the context of the word when “Passover” is used in a description. I would not want to accidentally pass over any meaningful details that might help readers enjoy a Passover *seder*.

As promised earlier, I want to mention another *haggadah* before I bring you my own version of the liturgy. (Stay with me, we're almost there.)

WHAT LITURGICAL BENEFIT COMES FROM A CAN OF COFFEE?

I grew up using a very famous Passover *Haggadah*.



More than 50 million copies of the Maxwell House Haggadah have been printed since 1932. It is literally the oldest, longest running sales promotion in the history of advertising.

BOOYAH! Connecting Passover to coffee was a stroke of genius going back to 1923. At that time, the ad firm got a rabbi to certify coffee was Kosher for Passover. Although beans are a legume not permitted during Passover, the rabbi declared them to be more like a berry than a bean. The full-page ad “likened a cup of Maxwell House coffee to the ‘fifth cup’ at the *seder*.” BRILLIANT! And so, it began. By 1932, customers at supermarkets

were receiving a free Maxwell House *Haggadah* with a can of Maxwell House coffee. Even former President Obama used the Maxwell House *Haggadah* at his presidential Passover *seders*.³²

TELL ME AGAIN, WHAT WAS THE LAST SUPPER?

By now, you might be wondering, “What is it I’ve gotten myself into?” You might even be questioning if you still want to celebrate a Passover. When you join me and my people in enjoying a *seder*, you connect yourself to an ancient tradition. Think about it.

Passover is the oldest, continuously practiced celebration in human history. The Passover has been celebrated for more than 3,500 years.

As you now know, the Last Supper was really the last Passover *seder* of our Jewish Messiah. It was attended by His Jewish friends known as *talmidim*—you might call them students or disciples. Some might wonder why non-Jews would care about such a Jewish festival? Well, since it is one of the very few events recorded in all four Gospels, the better question would be, “*If it was good enough for Jesus, why not me?*” Don’t quit now.

On Thursday night of the Passion week (14th day of Nisan), Jesus did what all Jews did. And we still do most of these same things today. Jesus celebrated a Passover *seder*. Everything from the wine to the *matzah* was part of His Jewish liturgy. Jesus was an observant Jew fulfilling His Jewish duty. He was obeying the

32 Rabbi Lawrence A Hoffman and David Arnow, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, Jewish Lights Publishing, (Woodstock, VT) 86-87, 2008.

words of Scripture which deemed several festivals, including the Passover celebration, to be conducted as a

“Statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” (Ex. 12:14b JPS)

If you join in a Passover celebration, you will definitely be doing what Jesus did. You will be hearing prayers that He prayed. You will be listening to stories He grew up hearing. And you will be obeying the same commandments He obeyed. I believe the result of following in His steps will lead you closer to Him and you will also be better prepared to understand His love.

WHY MISS THE BLESSING?

Jesus never stopped being a Jew. He never told His friends to discontinue Judaic practices. Modern Christians are **not** legally bound to obey the Jewish regulations to obtain or to maintain salvation. Yet, I must ask, “Why miss the blessing?” Great joy can be obtained from understanding and celebrating the Jewish festivals. Jesus and the earliest Christians practiced what was taught in the Holy Scriptures. This was their ancient biblical heritage. Is it any less our Christian heritage? Of course not.

DO YOU KNOW THE "ONE NEW MAN" SECRET?

And there is more! I have been withholding a secret. Now I must open a mystery that was hidden.

"And this is the secret: that the Gentiles will have their full share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's sons; both are invited to belong to his Church, and all of God's promises of mighty blessings through Christ apply to them both when they accept the Good News about Christ and what he has done for them. God has given me the wonderful privilege of telling everyone about this plan of his; and he has given me his power and special ability to do it well. Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the most useless Christian there is, yet I was the one chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles the Glad News of the endless treasures available to them in Christ; and to explain to everyone that God is the Savior of the Gentiles too, just as he who made all things had secretly planned from the very beginning." (Ephesians 3:6-9 TLB)

This is relevant because there was a time when God had an exclusive relationship with the Jews. Non-Jews were not yet invited into the bond of promise that God had with Israel.

"At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12)

But then the door of salvation was opened to the Gentiles and things changed. God did a creative new miracle when He made the Jews and Gentiles into what He deemed to be one new man. This was a sovereign decision of God to

“Create in Himself one new man from the two.”

(Ephesians 2:15b)

In Christ, God miraculously blended us together to worship Him as one. Therefore, we should honor Him as God desired. Passover is a great starting point. Let’s do what Jesus did at Passover.

CAN A NON-JEW PARTICIPATE IN A PASSOVER SEDER?

Before we get too far, and before the doors are locked, here’s a question some non-Jews might be wondering, *“Is it even safe to be here?”*

Let’s see what God declared about the matter.

“Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘These are the instructions for the festival of Passover. No outsiders (non-Jews) are allowed to eat the Passover meal.’”

Doesn’t that seem restrictive? God continued,

“But any slave who has been purchased may eat it if he has been circumcised.”

I guess if you're not a slave, this doesn't apply.

***“Temporary residents and hired servants
may not eat it.”***

Awkward, but not a deal breaker so far.

“The whole community of Israel must celebrate this Passover festival. ‘If there are foreigners living among you who want to celebrate the LORD’s Passover, let all their males be circumcised. Only then may they celebrate the Passover with you like any native-born Israelite. But no uncircumcised male may ever eat the Passover meal. This instruction applies to everyone, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner living among you.’” (Ex. 12:43-49 NLT)

If you're reading this at a Passover Seder, I'm guessing any uncircumcised gentlemen are quietly heading toward the exits.

No need to run. If anyone is concerned about this biblical mandate, we could call a local *mohel* and request “while-u-wait” service. FYI these folks are all well trained in the practice of *brit milah*, the “covenant of circumcision.”

(I must mention that in some Jewish communities, the mohel is also the local Kosher butcher and cantor in addition to performing circumcisions. Check the local Yellow Pages.³³)

Really, no need to run or worry. Anyone who desires to honor God and remember the great miracles recounted in our Passover are welcome to praise the Lord with us—no questions asked. Contrary to what the Exodus text implies, circumcision is *not* a requirement. And the Talmud concurs: “An uncircumcised non-Jew may keep the seder and the festival of Passover, but he or she cannot eat from the actual pesach-sacrifice: He *“shall not eat of it”* (Exodus 12:45), but he may eat unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. (b. Pesachim 96a).³⁴ Since we have no animal sacrifice from which to eat at our seder, no emergency surgery is required. Besides, everything is symbolic so you can enjoy the celebration and shed no blood.

BTW, if you are a believer in our Messiah, the blood has already been shed on your behalf. A wonderful Jewish author captured the comparison perfectly! “What Jesus is to Christians; the original paschal lamb is to Jews.” He captured the parallel between Jews and Christians succinctly saying, “In both cases, we are saved by the blood of the lamb.”³⁵ I must say, “Amen! He thoroughly grasped the similarity and the distinction.

33 Remember the Yellow Pages? If so, you might look for the Schmaladin ad, “HAVE KNIFE, WILL TRAVEL.” OK, that would be a waste of time. The secret is out. As a 1950’s kid, I was enthralled with B&W TV westerns. Some of you will remember the coolest dressed cowboy dandy of the genre--Paladin. He had his own business cards that famously stated, “HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL.” Now back to the seder stuff.

34 <https://www.bethimmanuel.org/articles/gentiles-and-passover>

35 Hoffman, 31.

WHAT WAS PASSOVER LIKE IN 1ST CENTURY JERUSALEM?

Alfred Edersheim, a great 19th century scholar offered this poignant view of Passover in ancient Jerusalem:

It was a gathering of universal Israel, that of the memorial of the birth-night of the nation, and of its Exodus, when friends from afar would meet, and new friends be made; when offerings long due would be brought, and purification long needed be obtained—and all worship in that grand and glorious Temple, with its gorgeous ritual. National and religious feelings were alike stirred in what reached far back to the first, and pointed far forward to the final Deliverance.³⁶

Passover was a glorious pilgrimage festival commanded to be celebrated by all Jews. It was a season of expectation and reflection.

IS IT BIBLE OR TRADITION?

Unlike *Hanukkah* (a non-biblical Jewish festival Jesus enjoyed),³⁷ Passover is a thoroughly biblical celebration. The *Pesach* traditions have changed over the centuries, but the command to honor and commemorate the Exodus has lasted ever since Pharaoh watched his firstborn son die while the Jewish

³⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, (London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883), 805.

³⁷ For information about this wonderful, yet non-biblical Jewish holiday, request *Hanukkah: Fact, Fun, & Fiction*. Also available from CROSSTALK. Request free copy at www.crosstalk.org or call 1-800-688-3422.

children were spared from God's angel of death. Ex. 12, the natural starting-point of study, suggests the following principal considerations.

“Passover (Heb. *Pesach*) comes from a verb meaning ‘to pass over’, in the sense of ‘to spare’ (Ex. 12:13, 27, *etc.*). This affords excellent sense; there is no need to jettison the time-honoured view that God literally passed over the blood-sprinkled Israelite houses, whilst smiting the Egyptian ones. The term is used both for the ordinance and for the sacrificial victim.”³⁸

HOW DID THE SACRIFICE OCCUR IN THE 1ST CENTURY?

Experts in Judaica and Church history provide valuable context. “Jewish usage in the last days of the Herodian Temple is reflected in the Mishnah tractate *Pesah\im*. The people gathered in the outer Temple court in companies to slaughter the Passover victims. The priests stood in two rows; in one row each man had a golden, in the other each man a silver, basin. The basin which caught the blood of the expiring victim was passed from hand to hand in continuous exchange to the end of the line, where the last priest tossed the blood in ritual manner on the altar. All this was done to the singing of the *Hallel* (Ps. 113-118). The celebrating companies were generally family units, but other common ties were possible, such as that which bound our Lord to his disciples.”³⁹

38 The New Bible Dictionary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

39 Ibid.

The sense of family has never been lost. This holiday is a time to gather with loved ones. Children, as well as the elderly, all participate in a traditional *seder*. In fact, the biblical presupposition commands:

“When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the ADONAI’S passover.” (Ex. 12:27 TLV)

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TIME OF CHRIST?

Turning to different historians for answers to these seldom asked questions provides conflicting reports about participation in the three biblical pilgrimage festivals.

“In New Testament times, all Israelite males were expected to appear in Jerusalem thrice annually, for the Feasts of Passover, of Weeks or Pentecost and of Tabernacles. Even Dispersion Jews sometimes conformed; the temporary population of the Holy City (cf. the Pentecost gathering of Acts 2) could swell to almost 3,000,000 according to Josephus (*BJ* 6. 425)—a figure reduced to the more realistic 180,000 by J. Jeremias (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 1969, pp. 83f).”⁴⁰

The number of Jewish pilgrims suggested by Josephus does seem staggering. He reported 3,000,000 in attendance at a very bad time in the land. It was a dangerous era in Jewish history. Animosity against Rome was on the rise. Concerns about revolution were in the air. How many might have attended during peaceful days when safety was less of an issue? There are Talmudic references suggesting that the headcount in attendance

40 *Ibid.*

might have been as many as 6,000,000 pilgrims! The rabbis propose that there was a study done during the time of King Agrippa (perhaps a decade after Jesus). Allegedly, the High Priest was instructed to count the number of kidneys from the lambs sacrificed on the Temple's altar. 600,000 lambs were reportedly slain during that Passover. Do the math. At ten people per lamb, the ranks of pilgrims may have actually swelled to more than double that reported earlier by Josephus.⁴¹

WHEN DID PASSOVER GET AMPUTATED FROM THE BODY OF CHRIST?

Now we know quite a bit about Passover. We have a little background into what it was like when Jesus participated in His ancient *seder*. **But, I must ask why Passover got amputated from general Christian practice by the doctors of the Church?**

Why do only a small percentage of modern churches celebrate or recognize Passover? In antiquity, it was directly connected to Easter. At that time, Passover could not be ignored. It was more mainstream.

WHEN DID THE EASTER BUNNY WHACK THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB?

As a point of historical reference, Easter was originally celebrated in conjunction with Passover. It was known in Greek as *Pascha*. In fact, the King James Bible's usage of the term "Easter" in Acts 12:4 is considered an error by many. *Pascha* might much better be described as Passover from the Hebrew word *Pesach*.

41 Jeffrey M. Cohen, 1001 Questions and Answers on Pesach, Jason Aronson, Inc., (Northvale NJ, 1996), 15-16.

The timing of Easter became an even larger controversy. By the 2nd century, Christian leaders became concerned about celebrating the Resurrection on any day other than Sunday. Following the Jewish festivals and calendar, Passover was the anchor to the Easter celebration. When the church became unyoked from Passover, it was decided that the Resurrection would be honored on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Though I reject the efforts of church leaders to move God's Sabbath from the 7th day to the 1st day of the week, I would give them a pass for wanting to celebrate the Resurrection on Sunday—the 1st day of the week. That was how it was described in the New Testament. Nevertheless, a legitimate problem existed. Passover always occurred on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of *Nisan* when the Jews were required to sacrifice the Passover lamb. Therefore, Passover often landed on a weekday. As the Church shifted its emphasis, a serious contention arose within the Early Church.

Those who celebrated on the 14th became known as *Quartodecimans* (from the Vulgate Latin *quarta decima* meaning fourteen). This practice was ultimately deemed to be a heresy by the Church. That was unfortunate. I wish other alternatives had been considered. In 325 CE, an utterly anti-Semitic church decree came from the First Council of Nicea. "*we would have nothing in common with that most hostile people, the Jews . . . we would withdraw ourselves from the evil fellowship of the Jews . . . It is our duty to have nothing in common with the murderers of our Lord.*" So, a circular letter from Constantine amplified the intentional disconnect of Passover from Easter.

The amputation of Passover from the church calendar led to a cute, but corrosive, spiritual mutation. Modern culture gladly traded the concept of a bloody, sacrificial Passover lamb for a chocolate covered, egg-laying Easter Bunny. And why not? What child would not enjoy a quick dash to find candy-filled plastic eggs? On their own, they would not choose to sit through the Exodus account or be confronted with the slaughter of a perfect lamb and the gruesome shedding of His blood. I hope that we can learn to reconnect Easter to Passover. We must teach our children the truth about God's salvation plan of the ages. And it is unwise to confuse them with obvious fake news.

If we tell our children to believe myths about Easter Bunnies and Santa Claus, how will they know when to trust us about other things?

Miracles about plagues, parting the waters, virgin births, and the Resurrection seem unbelievable . . . but they are true. We should do our best to tell our children these truths and help them avoid those preferred by a culture that rejects the unbelievable truths we hold dear. Thereby, our children will learn to trust us and also to trust God. This seems especially important about matters relating to Easter or Christmas. Please know I am not condemning the enjoyable holiday practices that many families take for granted. I am simply hopeful that our families and churches can re-engage with Passover. May God help us to draw us closer to His festival instructions and the practices enjoyed by Jesus.

**Chocolate bunnies remind me of the old
Miller Lite beer commercial:
“TASTES GREAT. . . LESS FILLING”
A fake bunny will never satisfy
like the true lamb.**

A QUICK COURSE ON NON-JEWISH DATING (OR CALENDARS 201)

Non-Jewish dating is a problem for many Jews.⁴² Non-Jewish calendars are perfectly acceptable. Picking a calendar is not as simple as walking into a bookstore during any given January and selecting a new one with photographs of cats, muscle cars, or Sports Illustrated swimwear. Our modern calendars are all based on what is called the Improved calendar. The “improvement” is not in the digital photography or paper quality. It is a calendar “improvement” adjusting for mathematical corrections to the length of days, and the resulting numbers of days in the calendar year. The last fix to our standardized calendar added one extra day each four years. When this 29th day of February is added in the fourth year of a cycle, it is called a Leap Year, such as was the case in 2020. This is our more accurate, modern, new and “Improved” version, often known as the Civil calendar. Surprisingly, it was not accepted internationally until 1923 when Greece finally joined the calendar club. The current Civil

42 That was a joke. But for some families it was not funny. I could write a book about the tsouris -grief I caused my parents. Some families never recover from a mixed-marriage of the first born son. And my parents got the news simultaneously while I told them of my unwavering declaration that I believed Jesus is Lord and that I had also been baptized. It was simply more pain than my parents could manage in one terrible blow. I wish I had found a better way to share my “good news.”

calendars of the United States have included this “improvement” since 1752. At that time, it replaced the Gregorian calendar of 1582, originally developed by Pope Gregory XIII. The Gregorian calendar was a corrected version of the Julian calendar of Rome developed by Julius Caesar in 46 BC.

Do you find this to be a little mind-numbing? Me too. Sorry about that. But this is important. There are currently at least 40 different calendars in use around the globe. In a shrinking world with expanding populations, diverging worldviews, and a cognizant acceptance of many different world religions, which calendar do we follow? It depends on who you ask and what event you are marking. If you’re setting a doctor’s appointment or texting a time to meet for coffee with a friend, your date books or cell phones need to be based on the same calendar system.

**History is long, and memories are short.
Modern calendars account for seconds lost in
a day and days lost in a century. Milestones are
measured differently. They get lost entirely if
not connected to a timeframe, a memorable
event, and a people.**

Passover is a very old festival connected to the Jewish people and a timeframe developed by rabbis who mark the beginning of their calendar from when they reckon God created the world. Therefore, the Hebrew calendar has a lot more years on it than the Gregorian calendar.

For example, *Rosh Hashanah* in the year 2022 marks 5,782 years from the Creation on the Hebrew Calendar. In that year of 5782, the 14th day of *Nisan* falls on April 15th—Tax Day. I can almost see the star of Braveheart crying out for “Freedom!” God

has allowed the IRS to continue viewing April 15th as Tax Day, not Passover. Guess which calendar takes precedence? Tax Law and Jewish Law are not the same thing. And if you think the Jewish calendar is confusing, take a deep breath and consider the IRS tax code which is nearly 74,000 pages long. When our final deliverance comes, what will become of the IRS? Who cares?

The tax codes are long, tedious, and frustrating. But they are a child's nursery rhyme compared to Jewish Law. One source describes potentially millions of pages of Jewish legal codes as follows:

*“There is an enormous volume of surviving information on Jewish law—hundreds of thousand, perhaps millions, of pages of primary sources covering about twenty-five hundred years. This is a very brief summary account, based mainly on the first three volumes of Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles, by Menachem Elon.”*⁴³

43 www.davidfriedman.com

BUT IS IT LEGAL?

Obviously, the rabbinic legal codes are quite expansive. And that is why many religious Jewish teachers and rabbis spend their entire lifetimes involved at their chosen *yeshivah*—specialized religious schools of higher learning.

And, just as the tax codes have loopholes for accountants to guide their clients to avoid paying excess taxes, it is my opinion that some rabbis use the plethora of rabbinic legislation to help religious Jews navigate the loopholes of Torah observance.

They have become the modern arbiters of *Torah*. The *Torah* is the Five Books of Moses.

As we know from Scripture, God gave the Law to Moses. Rabbinic Judaism believes that God also gave Moses the Oral Law. It is the rabbi's oral traditions that fill most of the pages studied by rabbinic scholars. With no disrespect intended, it reminds me of my very, very favorite Jewish joke about the biblical basis for some of the Jewish *kashrut--kosher* regulations. You must know that cheeseburgers are a no-no for reasons beyond cholesterol. One verse apparently says it all. It's literally repeated three times by God to Moses. So, God said,

“Moses, thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk.” (Exodus 23:19 JPS)

Moses pondered the command and asked God, "OK Lord, so we should not eat milk and meat together, right?" God said,

"Moses, thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk."

(Exodus 34:26 JPS)

Moses responded after careful thought, "Yes Lord. We'll wait a minimum of 6 hours between eating meat and dairy products. The two foods won't even touch in our stomachs." God spoke again,

"Moses, thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk." *(Deuteronomy 14:21 JPS)*

Moses quickly stuttered a penitent reply, "Oh, forgive me Lord. Now I understand. We'll maintain two sets of dishes. Our meat and dairy products won't ever touch the same eating surfaces. And, if accidentally, a dish is contaminated having touched the wrong food, we will bury the dish outside." God said, "Moses, do whatever you want!"

In a sense, some of the rabbinic rules might seem to go beyond the intent of Scripture. And some may miss the entire point. The rules about what Jews may or may not eat, and how kosher packages are labeled could be an example. One oddly interesting case involving Manischewitz Diet Thins *Matzos* ended up in the courts. Marketing and consumer protection issues can get sticky. The legal hearings for "the bread standard . . . took 10 years to resolve and amassed a record of 17,000 pages."⁴⁴ Since the

44. [cgottlieb.pdf \(harvard.edu\)](#). [Can the FDA Keep Kosher?: Regulation of Kosher Claims on Product Labels \(harvard.edu\)](#).

number of approved kosher items grew from 1,000 items in the 1970's to more than 30,000 in the 1990's, the rabbis, and those manufacturers appealing to those rabbis for kosher certification, have been busy. "The central motivating factor behind the surge in the numbers of products certified kosher is that it is a profit-making endeavor."⁴⁵ But the biblical basis for such certification is quite scant.

One of the primary Scripture references regarding kosher food preparation is found in Leviticus.

“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 maketh atonement by reason of the life. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel: No soul of you shall eat blood.”

(Leviticus 17:11 JPS)

The manner in which an animal is slaughtered, and the blood drained, has become the hallmark of identifying a meat product that is certified as kosher by the rabbinic authorities. That certification carries tremendous financial benefit to the meatpacker that markets kosher food. Without the proper logo, advertising the rabbi's certification, the higher prices charged for kosher meat could not be justified. Neither could the product be legally marketable to consumers requiring kosher meat. Squabbles and scandals over such certifications have been an embarrassment to some Jewish authorities. In my opinion, the biblical intent has been misinterpreted by both the rabbis and the consumers who believe an acceptable hot dog is determined

45 P. 244 [Vol. 21:201] [Are Kosher Food Laws Constitutionally Kosher? \(bc.edu\)](#).

exclusively by the logo. What was the purpose of removing the blood? Why were we not supposed to eat it? Allow me to present a portion of that same section of text in a more modern version.

“The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given you the blood to sprinkle upon the altar as an atonement for your souls; it is the blood that makes atonement because it is the life. That is the reasoning behind my decree to the people of Israel, that neither they, nor any foreigner living among them, may eat blood.”

(Lev. 13:11-12 TLB)

The blood was always intended to be our path to atonement. I am doubtful that God's primary goal was to create a kosher food industry. Yet somehow, rabbinic czars have been elevated to the pinnacle of valued gatekeepers by successful kosher slaughterhouses and packing plants. It is fine for religious Jews to follow the countless myriad of kosher regulations. But kosher food preferences won't provide atonement for a single sin committed by anyone. God always intended for the blood to accomplish that atonement through the form of a sacrifice, not a good kosher hot dog.

The rabbis have greatly expanded on the rules surrounding biblical adherence. That is not always a bad thing. There are often wonderful, proper reasons for such expansions. Conservative, cautious, careful observance can be a great thing. The ancient rabbis attempted to build what they perceived to be a fence around the *Torah* to help Jews stay away from the dangerous edges of disobedience. They didn't want folks falling off in sin. Alternatively, some of the rules look like loopholes from the outside. For instance, have you ever heard of the *Shabbos Goy*?

QUICK, SOMEONE CALL THE SHABBOS GOY!

In the synagogue where I grew up, our man was Frank. If Frank wasn't at work on the Sabbath, the place would have shut down.

A *Goy* is simply a non-Jew. It is not a derogatory term unless your Jewish son or daughter begins secretly dating a *shikse* or a *shegetz*--a non-Jewish girl or boy. In the context of the *Shabbos Goy*, a cooperative non-Jewish person performs important services to assist observant Jews and/or one's local *shul*—synagogue. In the simplest terms, someone needs to turn on the lights for services or fire up the furnace if the temperature drops. When the furnace or gas stove must be lit, someone must light it. Fires and work are prohibited on the Sabbath. But it is perfectly fine for a non-Jew to perform such perfunctory tasks. Hence, the *Shabbos Goy*. Without him (or her), we might be in the dark, cold and hungry. Or we'd break the rules ourselves. Some might consider this a "workaround" to avoid breaking the rule. Others see it as a reasonable way to remain technically observant and accept a little help from our gracious neighbors who are not obligated to follow the same Sabbath rules.

How much work is it to flip on a light switch?

It is no work at all. Is there really a Sabbath fire lit when the switch is flipped on? That depends on who did the electric wiring or to which rabbi you ask the question.

Is it more work to walk miles to temple or to take a leisurely drive? Driving is less work and easier on one's body. But internal

combustion engines burn fuel with tiny sparks. No fires of any kind are allowed during Sabbath. The rabbis decided that the work of hiking to temple is less of a violation than traveling by car. Conversely, climbing countless flights of stairs might be another matter. When you visit large hotels in Israel, you will notice some of the elevators accommodate Sabbath guests in a unique manner. If you are new to the experience, you will quickly learn that if the elevator automatically stops at all 28 floors, all the way up, and then again all the way down, it means you picked the Sabbath elevator. This is because the rabbis decided it was OK to ride on an electric elevator as long as one did not need to push the little button that selected your floor. Observant Jews are exempted from climbing the stairs on the Sabbath if the elevator has the correct program installed to automatically stop at each floor. It makes for a long, choppy ride on packed elevators. But it circumvents the problem of using a delightful, modern, electric convenience on the Sabbath.

It is great that the rabbis have found “workarounds” to help observant Jews abide by the Sabbath regulations without giving up all the modern conveniences afforded by our hi-tech age of electric lights, gas stoves, indoor plumbing, or rolled toilet paper.⁴⁶ The people want what the people want. As my Orthodox Jewish friend Elliot likes to remind us, creative rabbis find ways to be accommodating. As Blu Greenberg, a Jewish feminist author said, “*Where there is a rabbinic will, there is a Halachic way.*”

46 Tearing sheets of toilet paper off the roll is prohibited on Sabbath. Many observant Jews cut the sheets off in advance to avoid violating the rabbinic prohibitions. It's no wonder Jews are often skilled planners and fastidious about budgeting their “resources.” Failing to estimate correctly could lead to embarrassing outcomes. And as my father of blessed memory used to say, “No job is done until the paperwork is complete.”

That is a clever way of saying the rabbinic laws are flexible.

As the U.S. Supreme Court sometimes interpret the Constitution in ways to fit current viewpoints held by the judges, so the rabbis sometimes craft legal opinions that “interpret” certain biblical restrictions in ways that make it less demanding for adherence by modern Jews. And in that spirit, religious legal experts created an innovative Passover “workaround.” It is called *Mekhirat Hametz*—the “sale” of our leaven.

**WHERE’S THE HAMETZ? WHO YA GONNA CALL?
HAMETZ BUSTERS!**

How does a practitioner ensure that no trace of yeast remains in their home? God said,

“No leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel.” (Exodus 12:19 NLT)

This important Passover prohibition seems clear. No *hametz* is to remain in your house. But houses are pretty big and *hametz* can be pretty small. How can you be sure you got it all? The rabbis created a fascinating modern interpretation to solve this Passover problem in a most inventive way.

The tradition requires a careful cleaning process to be certain that a home is kosher for Passover--*Pesahdik*. Observant Jews attempt to remove every trace of leaven--*hametz* from their dwelling. Not even a crumb of leaven is to remain. It is all to be destroyed. God wants our homes and our lives to be pure. Do we?

The Rabbinic tradition has “enhanced” the procedure. No doubt, religious Jews have a desire to please God. Nevertheless, our traditions may inadvertently circumvent His instructions with rabbinic approval.

QUESTION:

How can a Jew be expected to destroy all his products with leaven if his livelihood was dependent on the items?

Example: It would be an unreasonable hardship to ask a Jewish shopkeeper, caterer, or baker to destroy the myriad of leavened products in their inventory. Or consider a family on a tight budget. They could be deeply stressed if required to destroy the foods in their pantry or cabinets.

ANSWER:

*Merkhirat hametz--a legal fiction was invented. **This creative system allowed us to have our cake mix and eat it too . . . after Pesach.** It was decided by the rabbis that Jews could temporarily sell their hametz to non-Jews. In this manner, it was not required to destroy everything ritually impure. Neither was it necessary to remove it from their homes according to the rabbi's imaginative interpretation.*

In modern times, a local rabbi was enabled to represent all the Jews of his congregation to symbolically sell their *hametz* to a cooperative non-Jew for a symbolic fee. The Jewish congregant would then simply tie a ribbon around their cupboard doors to make the leavened products theoretically inaccessible. The deal was made. Money changed hands. The leaven remained exactly where it would be found after Passover. Everybody wins.

But is it really legal or truly righteous?

The ceremonial aspect of children watching and helping their parents clean the *hametz* from their homes had great spiritual value. The intricate preparations of a family culminating in a Passover gathering was both meaningful and remarkable. Even some secularized Jews reconnect to their roots at Passover as they prepare for the ceremony. I appreciate the lovely traditions that surround our festival. But I wonder what some youngsters think when they see a cute ribbon tying the handles shut on the Frosted Flakes or snack cabinet. Do they instinctively think, “Something’s not quite genuine?” As a teenager, I noticed these things and found them to feel disingenuous. And now, in a time when teens and young adults seek authenticity of faith, what do such religious contrivances communicate? Are they curious if the leaven is really supposed to be removed? Do some wonder if leaven is really forbidden, or is it simply hidden like so many other forbidden acts in life which might be creatively covered up? My parents were completely forthright people. So, I never doubted their motives. Yet, if we are honest observers, some traditional practices do raise questions.

WHO LIKES PASSOVER FOOD . . . REALLY?

One question has never been answered to my satisfaction. Why do we pretend to enjoy such bland food? Even the internet understands. That is why sites promoting “9 Passover Desserts That Don’t Suck” are popular. The obvious is true. Most truly kosher Passover foods sound better than they taste. See <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/9-passover-desserts-that-dont-suck/>.

Anyone who has ended a fast after the Day of Atonement-*-Yom Kippur* (or an extended time of prayer and fasting) recognizes the joy of finally eating whatever foods had been eliminated from one's diet. For those who "enjoy" eight days of breadless (arguably tasteless) Passover foods, a run to the donut shop or burger joint after Passover can be much more pleasing than remembered before the fast.

My Jewish mother of blessed memory was a fantastic Jewish cook. My sister might be an even greater wizard in the kitchen. If you tasted her Purim pastries, you'd consider conversion. Still, I could never understate the culinary crisis created by the Passover dietary restrictions. A cute story explains my sentiment about unleavened Passover foods.

A rabbi sat down next to a blind man on a bench in the park during Passover. The rabbi was munching on some *matzah*. He could see that his neighbor looked hungry. After a short time, he nudged the blind man and gave him a piece of his lunch *matzah*. The blind man took a bite and tapped the rabbi on the shoulder and politely asked, "Who wrote this?"⁴⁷

Like the blind man, I must say I've eaten Passover items that tasted like a comic book. But this regulatory rigging is really sort of comical. Some problematic festival requirements are now being managed in the most ingenious ways.

IS THAT LEGAL TOO?

21st century Jews can now rid their homes of *hametz* without ever leaving their living room or changing out of their pajamas. Entrepreneurial services enable cooperative *goyim* (plural of

47 Humor provided by Koshers4Passover.com

goy—gentile) to partner with smart Jewish businessmen who have the foresight to solve an annual problem experienced by observant Jews.

Nowadays, you don't even need to call the rabbi to make your deal. You can simply go online to "sell" your hametz, no muss, no fuss.

It's authorized and certified by "leading halachic authorities." The rules now provide that "online authorizations are acceptable for the purpose of selling *chametz*." But even the "experts" recognize that everyone must squint to make this look kosher. Their own online marketing states, "The traditional and preferred practice, however, is for the authorization transaction to be done in person with the local rabbi."⁴⁸ I do not know if the "preferred" practice is better because it avoids cutting out the local rabbi, and violating his franchise territory, *or if some might worry it fails to pass the smell test!*

Is this what God had in mind when He instructed Moses? Was he told to **pretend** to remove the leaven or was he told to **remove** the leaven? Is it really OK to retain real possession of that which is forbidden without retaining "legal" possession? I understand that it is enough to satisfy the rabbinic regulation. It says so plainly on their Internet website. Though it seems like a very strange theological stretch, this proposition is not from the whacko fringe of the Jewish faith. It was declared by one of the most respected and admired Ultra-Orthodox Jewish organizations in the world. Presumably, it satisfies the rabbis who penned the rules. Does it satisfy God?

48 www.Chabad.org

DOES ANYONE KNOW THE BAG LIMIT ON EASTER BUNNIES?

Please don't judge my people for following interpretations or traditions that seem odd. What could be a bigger stretch than the Easter Bunny or Christmas trees? If we're honest and objective,

**Christians have as many strange traditions as Jews. They're just not strange to the same folks.
No one has a monopoly on hypocrisy.**

I will also say that Judaism has some of the most beautiful and meaningful traditions imaginable. There is a great need for tradition in the human experience. Traditions enrich our lives. However, I also believe there is an even greater need for truth in the human soul.

WHY IS MATZAH STRIPED & PIERCED?

Consider a simple Messianic Jewish twist that could become a curious myth or challenging tradition if left unquestioned. Why is *matzah* striped and pierced? For some of us, it's become our *matzah* flag. I might even suggest we could call it "the scars & stripes."

The imagery is great, and it perfectly fits our narrative about Jesus. As we say in Texas, "*That preaches!*" But another Texas truism is also relevant. "*That dog won't hunt.*"

Why is our matzah striped and pierced? The answer is really quite simple. That's the way Manischewitz© makes matzah!

In the Middle Ages, the answer would have been very different. Community ovens were used to bake the holiday needs. The perforations were accomplished with the aid of a special tool resembling a little wheel with sharp teeth (correctly known as a *reidel*). These were used to be certain that no moisture bubbles were trapped in the dough that would lead to fermentation.⁴⁹

No pun intended, but please don't think I like bursting bubbles . . . I don't. Nevertheless, accuracy and honesty are much needed characteristics in modern Christian scholarship. Some who believe that Jesus is the Messiah try to find a Christological emphasis for every aspect of the Passover tradition. Sometimes we go too far. There is no need to insist that the pierced *matzah* reflects the symbolism of the nails and spear wound endured by Jesus. It is too easily suggested that the grooves and dark stripes on the *matzah* are there to represent the lash marks that scarred the back of Jesus. That provides a handy story to tell. But it is merely a pleasant result of modern mass-production *matzah* bakeries. In harmony with all orthodox Christians, I believe that Jesus was:

“Wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:7)

49 Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Judaica, 1948 ed., S.v. “Matzoth.”

I don't need *Manischewitz*® to believe the report of the Gospels. I need the Bible. Personally, I choose to believe that the entire Bible is inspired, inerrant, and indispensable in our quest to know God. Like the old country preacher said, "I believe the whole Bible . . . from the table of contents to the maps." I believe the Bible because God's grace has enabled me to believe the truth. More relevant, the lack of a Christological implication in the manufacturing process of *matzah* in no way negates the value of the biblical command to eat unleavened bread in remembrance of the Exodus. Jesus understood the obligation. The Apostles believed it was important. It is to our own detriment to disregard the celebration. Sadly, modern *matzah* does not look like ancient *matzah*. One can only hope it tasted better in the old days. But I doubt it.

IS CHRIST IN THE PASSOVER?

Of course, Christ is *in* the Passover. But for my purposes, I would rather remind my readers that Christ was *at* the Passover. *Were you?*

Do the physical attributes of modern *matzah* allow us to present a coincidental similarity to our picture of the suffering of Jesus? Do spiritual applications exist? Absolutely! The middle *matzah* is symbolic of the lamb. The lamb is symbolic of Jesus. So the *matzah* metaphor is perfect. And modern, picture-perfect, machine-pierced *matzah* is striped and pierced before it is shrink-wrapped in the box. But let's remember that many traditions are imposed. They are not implicit or demanded.

These facts are incontrovertible. Consider the following:

- ***Matzah is the lechem oni—the “bread of affliction” (Deut. 16:3) Certainly, Jesus suffered and endured affliction.***
- *All believers can recognize messianic significance in the redemption from bondage in slavery.*
- *It brings joy and confidence to identify that Jesus became our Paschal lamb.*
- *The children of Israel were spared and redeemed from the destruction brought by the angel of death. Redemption came through the application of the blood of the Paschal lamb onto the doorposts of their homes. The blood of Christ redeems us from the destructive judgment that would otherwise be our destiny. Instead, the blood of the Lamb of God covers our sins. There is a sense in which His blood has been applied to the “doorposts” of our hearts.*
- *Jesus secured our deliverance.*

God, on the other hand, is more than a lamb. God provided the lamb. Never forget, He also sent a flood to Noah and plagues to Egypt. Ignore His demand for justice in judgment at your own peril!

THIS LEADS TO AN AWKWARD QUESTION, WHO KILLED THE EGYPTIAN BABY BOYS?

QUESTION:

Who was “the destroyer” that killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians?

ANSWER:

Many presume the killer was the “angel of death.”

WRONG?

Not exactly. Both in Scripture, and in the haggadah, the “perpetrator” is more correctly known as the LORD!

My parent’s version of the *haggadah* (yes, created by that wonderful wellspring of theological wisdom, Maxwell House Coffee), reads as follows:

“I will pass through the land of Egypt: I myself and not an angel.” The text continues, “And I will smite every firstborn: I myself and not a Seraph: And on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I myself and not a messenger. I, the Eternal, I am He, and none other (emphasis mine).”⁵⁰

This might sound unreasonable to those who believe that God is a cosmic teddy-bear promising warm fuzzy feelings for all who choose to live in His gentle kingdom. But that world is unrealistic. Some modern monotheists are unwilling to answer

⁵⁰ This quote is from the Deluxe Edition of the Maxwell House Haggadah that was commonly distributed by the General Foods Corp. in the mid 1960's page 17.

fundamental questions that might shake their faith in a “teddy-bear god.”

There is no god of warm-fuzzies who is only responsible for sunshine, health, wealth, and peace. If there was, what of storms, death, poverty, and destruction?

In contradistinction, the God of Israel is Lord of the sunshine, Lord of the rain, and most assuredly, Lord of the rainbow! (Gen. 9:13). He is more than a “teddy-bear god.” He is also Job’s God who permitted loss and unwarranted suffering. How can a “teddy-bear god” of naïve believers shoulder the burden of responsibility for destroying every living person on the face of the earth, except those in Noah’s family?

GOD: LORD OF ALL & LORD OVER CIRCUMSTANCE!

Within a modern humanistic framework for God, such devastation might appear irreconcilable. I propose that Jews and Christians who respect the Scriptures should nurture a corrected view. We should study to transcend the simplistic view of the “teddy-bear god.” We must seek to understand God from the vantage point of biblical Israel. The children of Israel saw the God of might and power. God redeemed Israel with His mighty out-stretched arm. In so doing, He also commanded them to keep the Passover in remembrance of the occasion. My dog-eared King James Bible declares:

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. 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” (Ex. 12:12-13 KJV).

Later in the same chapter God spoke:

“For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on 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.” (Ex. 12:23 KJV)

This presents a God working in tandem with the “Destroyer.” In Hebrew, the term used to describe “Destroyer” is:

מִשְׁחֵת // *Mashcheet*

Psalm 78 provides an interesting summary of the miraculous woes that plagued the Egyptians. The death of the firstborn males was perpetrated by what appears to be an angelic gang,

“He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility—a band of destroying angels.” (Ps. 78:49b NIV)

The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language, is an idiomatic paraphrasing translation with its own foibles. The late Dr. Eugene Peterson presents a creative scene around the event. His colorful view attributes the destruction from the tenth plague to,

“An advance guard of disease-carrying angels.”

(Psalm 78:49b MSG)

How it all happened is a curious enigma. But God absolutely made it happen. Both Judaism and Christianity reject the concept of dualism as understood within paganism. Unfortunately, adherents among both religions inadvertently support the philosophical underpinnings whereby dualism prospers.

It is a mistake to promote the notion that there is a god of evil working in the human realm to perform his own independent will.

Such a god of evil is often associated with the character introduced in Scripture known as Satan. He is commonly presumed to have his own agenda for bringing destruction and foisting evil upon mankind. Some moderns seem to believe that Satan is supernaturally empowered and functions independently like a pagan god. The religion of Biblical Israel does not present the character of Satan as either independent or autonomous. Rather, “*the waster*,” or the “*destroyer*,” as the force for destruction is sometimes called, is indisputably subservient to God.

“Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.”

(Isa. 54:16 KJV) [emphasis mine]

The same verse in Hebrew is particularly revealing:

הוּ (הַיְהוָה) אָנֹכִי, בְּרָאֲתִי תָרַשׁ--נִפְחַ בְּאֵשׁ
פָּתָח, וּמוֹצִיא כָּלִי לְמַעֲשֵׂהוּ; וְאָנֹכִי בְּרָאֲתִי
מִשְׁחִית, לְחַבֵּל.

The identical term is used to describe the source of destruction in the Passover account. It was the waster, called to be “*the destroyer*,” who killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians according to Exodus 12:23 in the Hebrew.

מִשְׁחִית // *Destroyer*

The same Hebrew word for the “*Destroyer*” is used in both texts identifying the God of Israel as the creator of the waster, and, in fact, the same God who acted in tandem with the destroyer to bring about Israel’s deliverance in the Exodus account. The God of Israel who created life, is somehow associated with “the angel of death.” That connection does not make God bad. It makes Him big . . . very big! God is sovereign. Everything is subject to the power of God. That is why we can trust that, with God, all things ARE possible.

The Bible is clear that Satan is an enemy of our soul. He is a real entity with some amount of real juice. His job-related skills are to lie, steal, kill, and destroy. He should not be given more credit than is biblical. Neither should he be underestimated or ignored. There is a reason Satan is known as “the god of this world.”⁵¹ We live in a fallen world where this fallen angel harasses mere humans. Satan is certainly a master of sin. He’s been sinning longer than any other creature in God’s creation.

**But do not be deceived.
God is sovereign and satan is subservient.**

In Job, God called Satan to account. He is evil and malicious. But Satan holds no sway over our King. Instead of fearing Satan, we do well to fear God and to draw near to the safety of His will. Satan will ultimately be judged and punished as an enemy of God. Let us remember that it is God Who judges and punishes His enemies. However, let us never forget that it is also God Who forgives, redeems, and delivers.

If we can come to grips with this issue of God’s sovereignty, we can avoid the theological arguments that cause us to doubt God, to diminish God, or to cast aspersions on His character. He is perfect. He is good. He loves us.

**God is sovereign, and neither Hell nor its
emissaries have any power over God or His
Messiah.**

That is the foundation upon which my faith and the Scriptures rest.

51 2nd Corinthians 4:4 KJV

THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT?

My problem is not with the destroyer. My bout is not with Satan. I do not wrestle with Pharaoh. I agree with the 1970 Earth Day philosopher, Pogo, who said “WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS US.” It might be better edited to, “HE IS ME!” I am my biggest problem. We must not default to Geraldine’s excuse in the old Flip Wilson routine, “*The devil made me do it.*”⁵² I am not such a bad guy; I merely have a lot of leaven left in my life. Consider the profound view of a fine Jewish author:

*In rabbinic interpretation, hametz is seen as symbolic of the yetzer ha-ra—the evil inclination. The removal is seen as a metaphor for an inner process of purging and freeing ourselves of impurity.*⁵³

Philo, a Greek-Jewish contemporary of Jesus, said it even better.

Leaven is forbidden on account of the rising which it causes; this prohibition again having a figurative meaning, intimating that no one who comes to the altar ought at all to allow himself to be . . . puffed up by insolence; but such persons may keep their eyes fixed on the greatness of God, and so obtain a proper conception of the weakness of all created beings . . .

52 [Flip Wilson “The Devil Made Me Do It” on The Ed Sullivan Show - Bing video](#)

53 Strassfeld, 9.


*for my fine fellow, you came naked into the world, and you shall leave it again naked, having received the interval between your birth and death as a loan from God.*⁵⁴

The brief span between birth and death is a loan from God. How does God calculate the time value of His investment in our lives? How do we value His loan while we still breathe? Preachers have preached about it and we've all seen the dash on a tombstone between the dates of birth and death. We should all make the most of our lives lived during the dash. My advice is to not live it as a mad dash between chaos and cataclysm. It should be a full life complete with joy and more joy. We should have hope and find fulfillment. We should pray in faith and expect Divine intervention. Of course, we will also experience unexpected challenges and opportunities to trust God. So, trust God we must, even when some questions remain unanswered. Unanswered questions can be very troubling. To my dismay, while I was diligently working to complete the manuscript for this book, I got caught in the dash with some unanswered questions. It felt like God had forced me to look at ancient realities I didn't want to see. As the author of this book, I needed to know the answers before I asked the questions of my readers. This work was essentially completed until three ugly questions surfaced.

⁵⁴ The Works of Philo, Special Laws I: LIII 293-295, p. 562.

**SOME QUESTIONS ARE ONLY ANSWERED BY GOD
AND MANY QUESTIONS HAVE NO EASY ANSWERS.**

I invest much of my time studying the Bible. It is a passion that makes me seem odd to many people. Just when I thought this book was finished, my studies assailed me with new questions . . . very bothersome questions. The entire Passover, Egypt, Moses, God, slavery story sort of twisted me up in an unexpected manner. I was totally unprepared for this and it temporarily stopped me from finishing this manuscript. I read some Bible chapters in a new light that caused me pain, uncertainty, and even anger. I was forced to ask some terrible questions about my people and myself. I assume some non-Jews have asked the first two of these questions behind our backs many times. The third question went directly to God. Quite honestly, I don't like the way I asked it and I was extremely troubled because the answer was not in sight. I feared I would not get an acceptable answer.

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- **How could the Jews have been so blind that they ignored the miracles that freed them from Egypt?** Asked another way, if you had seen God pour out deadly plagues on your enemies, while miraculously sparing you, wouldn't you have paid attention to His instructions?
 - **How could the Jews have been so ungrateful that they worshiped a golden calf instead of the God that parted the Red Sea and destroyed the attacking enemy army?** Really, why give up

on a God who saved your bacon (aka Beef Fry⁵⁵ to Jewish kids of my generation)? Parting the Red Sea was so epic, it even enshrined Charlton Heston in Hollywood history.⁵⁶ The Red Sea miracle has caused believers and skeptics to marvel ever since Moses penned the news story. Yet the Jews who followed Moses acted like it never happened within weeks of their enemies being instantaneously buried in a watery grave. How did they do such a vile, ungrateful thing?

- **Why did God prescribe over 400 years of slavery to the Jews in Egypt, generations before they'd ever set foot in the land of Pharaoh?** God told Abraham this would happen as recorded in Genesis 15:13. ***“Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there”*** (NIV).

55 Feel free to completely ignore this superfluous footnote. But just in case you wondered, “Beef Fry” was expensive fake bacon in a kosher package. Interestingly, many new fake alternatives for desirable foods prohibited by the kosher laws are seeing explosive growth. “Scientists, rabbis and marketers have been collaborating to bring the industry into the 21st century. ‘Advances in kosher food have been made by the imitation approach,’ said Joe Regenstein, professor of food science at Cornell University and a member of the National Kosher Food Advisory Council. In the search for kosher equivalents to nonkosher products, he said, scientists and rabbis have created soy ‘cheesecakes’ that can be eaten with meat, ‘cheeseburgers’ that are actually fish patties topped with faux cheese, and imitation crab and shrimp.” When it comes to forbidden fruit, where there’s a will, there’s a way . . . and a profitable marketing scheme. [You Don’t Have to Be Jewish to Love This Business - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/27/us/you-dont-have-to-be-jewish-to-love-this-business.html).

56 [The Ten Commandments \(1956 film\) - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ten_Commandments_(1956_film)).

The long history of Judaism covers a myriad of Jewish heroes, victims, and scoundrels. But these three questions are focused on the era framed between the death of Joseph in Egypt and the early leadership of Moses in the wilderness. Admittedly, I was frustrated when I began pondering these matters. The answers to the first two questions were not satisfying. The third question was paralyzing. **I asked God, why He sent His people into slavery for 400 years?** I wondered what had happened during those 400 years that caused God's people to become so tragically disconnected from Him? These were not obvious questions and they did not have obvious answers.

We know very little about what happened during our 400 years in slavery. When Joseph died, nobody in power remained to advance the cause of the Jews in Egypt. Whereas life had been great under Joseph's rule, it rapidly deteriorated without his influence. Eventually, they went from losing influence to losing their freedom. After centuries of being powerless slaves, the Passover situation suddenly transitioned to what must have seemed like a fairy tale. When Moses led the Jews out of Egypt, they departed with wagonloads carrying the wealth of Egypt.

But, a story is lacking if it only bookends "Once upon a time," and "They lived happily ever after." The fairy tale in the middle is what excites children. Jewish history is not a fairy tale. Yet most of us are stranded with only a beginning and an end to the history of our centuries in slavery.

The Bible provides scant details of these obscure centuries. History provides even less. We know the Jews fell out of favor in Egypt after Joseph's influence waned. We know bits and pieces about the earliest days of Moses as a baby under a paranoid, anti-Jewish Pharaoh. We know very few factoids about Moses as an adult in Egypt--except that he was guilty of manslaughter. Then, later in his life, we learned of his call back to Egypt, the Exodus, and his death prior to entering the land of promise. The 400 hundred years in between are even more silent than the so-called "Silent Years" of the much later Intertestamental Era (the four centuries between the time of the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament).

The more I looked for answers about what happened in Egypt between the time of Joseph, the Exodus, and the Red Sea, the more discouraged I became. It seemed so improbable. It was such a short season between God's miraculous rescue from Pharaoh and Israel's devastating disobedience. The enslaved Hebrews saw the plagues unlock the bonds of Egypt. They all walked across the parted waters on dry ground and watched their enemies instantly drowned. As many as 2,000,000 people witnessed one of the greatest miracles in human history. Yet instead of continued dedication to God, many Jews sunk into degradation and dishonored Him very soon after their miraculous crossing.

Joshua followed Moses out of Egypt. After the death of Moses, he became God's chosen leader to bring the Jews into Canaan. Joshua's specific warning provided a brief personal look into the Jew's lives in Egypt.

“Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt.” (Joshua 24:14b TLB)

These words were from Joshua who had been a former Jewish slave. He had lived in Egypt.

Joshua’s firsthand account confirms that the Jews in Egypt had embraced idol worship. Otherwise the command to stop worshipping idols would have been nonsense.

The fact of Jewish idolatry in Egypt was surprising to me. I guess it shouldn’t have been a shock. But it was. It also answered the second question. **“How could they have been so ungrateful that they worshiped a golden calf instead of the God that parted the Red Sea and destroyed the attacking enemy army?”** It wasn’t merely a matter of being ungrateful. Rather, at their core, some of the Jewish slaves were simply idol worshipers. Apparently, that was what they did in Egypt. It was also what they did in the wilderness when they became afraid that Moses and his God had deserted them.

The answer made me angrier.

Nevertheless, I became convinced that the golden calf and idolatry were simply the default setting for some of the people who did not yet know the God of Israel or trust the God of the Bible.

Wait . . . how could Israel trust the God of Israel? There was no nation of Israel yet. How could they trust the God of the Bible? Moses had not yet written the Bible.

God had not yet identified Himself to these fleeing slaves as their covenant God. I am not justifying their sin. I am merely trying to understand and explain their behavior. Turning to idols seemed unsophisticated, ungrateful, and uncalled for. But what else would be expected of idol worshipers? Idolatry was all that some of them knew.

The Law of God was still on the FedEx truck when Moses crashed and broke the rockument containing God's Ten Commandments to the orgiastic people dancing around Aaron's golden calf. I concluded that the people were unsophisticated, ungrateful, and probably undressed by the time Moses shut down their party. One version of Scripture states,

“Moses saw that the people were naked.”

(Exodus 32:25 KJV)

Another implicates Aaron as the party-*meister*.

“Moses saw that the people had been committing adultery—at Aaron’s encouragement, and much to the amusement of their enemies.” *(Exodus 32:25 TLB)*

Forgive me if this is all old news to everyone else. I had held my people in higher regard and blindly assumed that Judaism had been preserved in Egypt. But such idealism seems naïve in the face of God's own characterization of their behavior according to the words of the Psalmist.

“When they were in Egypt, they paid no attention to your marvelous deeds or your wonderful love.”

(Psalm 106:7 CEV)

Realistically, the Jews in slavery were not lighting Shabbos candles or discussing the validity of Egyptian circumcision practices. They were just trying to survive.

Judaism was not yet so well defined. And the Jews were no longer living a very Jewish lifestyle. They were simply poor, struggling Egyptian slaves existing in a relatively godless existence.

Centuries living in slavery, in a nation which embraced idols, took a costly toll on the people of God.

The people of God who were led out of Egypt no longer resembled the people of God who had been led into Egypt!

This shouldn't have been a surprise. But I had never reflected on the subject. This realization suggests we might do well to consider our own weakened Judeo-Christian culture. Have we radically deviated from what our faith requires? Do 21st century believers resemble the people of God who promoted their faith to 18th or 19th century Americans? Do today's people of God behave like earlier generations of believers who were less connected to a culture that winks at promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, and abortion? Was the morality of earlier Christian generations defined by social media, Hollywood stars, or perverted politicians? Of course not. Historically, the Bible set the standard for acceptable norms. The Bible was held in high

esteem and used to be more respected by the government and the populace. It is no longer the gold standard of our society for defining right from wrong. In mere decades, we've seen enormous deterioration of the moral standards of western civilization and western Christianity. Imagine the corrosive power of centuries living as slaves in a land totally devoid of the knowledge of God.

My conclusion was that the golden calf was not an aberration. It was a religious practice embraced by the Jewish slaves of Egypt.

None of these thoughts had ever occurred to me. Therefore, none of them had bothered me until I was confronted with a different reading from a paraphrase of the Bible. I was sitting in a coffee shop in California reading from the stack of Bibles I had packed. My studies were in Ezekiel. One doesn't usually think of the Exodus account while engaging the musings of what seem like a hallucinogenic experience of an ancient Hebrew prophet. But I was captured by the 20th chapter of Ezekiel where the prophet reported that God said,

“I chose Israel and revealed myself to her in Egypt.”
(Ezekiel 20:5 TLB)

Suddenly, these silent years became less silent.

“Then I said to them: ‘Get rid of every idol; do not defile yourselves with the Egyptian gods.’”
(Ezekiel 20:7 TLB)

Then I realized that the Jews may have already angered God way back in Egypt.

“But they rebelled against me and would not listen.”

(Ezekiel 20:8a TLB)

A pattern was revealed.

“They didn’t get rid of their idols nor forsake the gods of Egypt. Then I thought, I will pour out my fury upon them and fulfill my anger against them while they are still in Egypt.” *(Ezekiel 20:8b TLB)*

God was judging us, and He intended to pour out His anger on us while we were living as slaves. This happened during our bondage. Our enslavement happened precisely as God had predetermined and foretold to Abraham centuries in advance of the fulfilment.

Initially I was perplexed. Then I became distressed. I read the relevant chapters in six different versions. It made me even more upset. I sat there reading and praying. I talked to myself. I prayed some more. The folks in the coffee shop probably thought I was imbalanced. Literally, I sat there for hours reading the same things over and over. I met with a mature Christian friend and his wife. I asked them to pray for me. I invited them to help me sort out my concerns while sitting in the coffee shop. They are great friends and their encouragement was helpful. But I was on my own to sort out my troublesome conclusions.

GOD—WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

I was angry. Everything about this account in Ezekiel seemed unfair. I finally framed my anger into a question. It was an ugly question. I asked God, “What did you expect?” You left us alone in Egypt. We were enslaved by pagans. We had no teachers. We had no rabbis. We had no Torah. We had no prophets, priests, or pastors. We just wanted to get by and not be beaten.

We were surrounded by idol worshipers who were in charge of our meals, our work details, our housing, and our lives. Barring a miracle (which we had never seen in 400 years), all we could expect was a dismal future. We just wanted to survive. Again, I asked, “God, what did you expect?”

Of course, the birth account of Moses was akin to a miracle. But who knew about that except for his parents and older sister? Who knows how many slaves had heard the story of Abraham’s ram caught in a thicket? Which slaves had records of Jacob’s ladder or Joseph’s dreams? Perhaps none of them knew. Were the slaves surfing the Internet to catch up on episodes about the faith of their long-forgotten ancestors or were they just trying to avoid the whip and put enough blocks in Pharaoh’s wall to keep their own families from starving?

Many of the slaves probably wanted to act like their Egyptian bosses. They probably wanted to endear themselves to the people in charge so they could garner extra rations or secure a better position among the other slaves. Mirroring Egyptian beliefs and

culture was probably a normal aspiration for underappreciated, overworked slaves. If they could fit in, it would be safer than standing in opposition or being singled out. Respecting the religion of their bosses was likely a smarter play than demeaning the pagan beliefs of their taskmasters.

After hundreds of years of hopelessness, they held little hope that religion would get them out of slavery.

Going along to get along might have seemed like a wise choice to a pathetic slave.

None of this seemed fair and I was angry because I know life isn't always fair. But I couldn't reconcile God's words in Ezekiel. He was thinking about pouring out His fury on a bunch of people who might never have gotten the memo about what God expected of them.

They may have had no reason to believe God was coming back to take them out of Egypt.

The more I studied, the more I struggled. 400 years earlier, Joseph believed that the day would come when the Jews would leave Egypt. He certainly wasn't anticipating centuries of slavery before that day. At the close of his life, he said,

“God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.” (Exodus 13:19 NLT)

Moses was aware of Joseph's dying aspirations. His bones accompanied the freed slaves when they departed Egypt. But Joseph's prayer was spoken 400 years earlier, at the time of his death, prior to his people being enslaved!

Before I left the coffee shop, I called another highly respected friend in Christian leadership. I was blessed to be able to visit with him and one of the premier Bible teachers of our generation. They recognized I was uncomfortable with my own conclusions and my inability to come to terms with the discrepancy I was feeling. They challenged me at a deep level. My questions sounded irreverent and a bit unchristian. Nevertheless, their prayers and counsel were a great blessing. But my answers remained elusive. Only a revelation could bring peace. I was unable to get any release to drop the matter. I continued reflecting. What did God expect from a bunch of hopeless slaves who had been left in their condition for centuries without leadership or a map to freedom?

My personal theological default position goes back to Randy's Rule of Theology #3: God is good and He does all things well. I finally hit the reset and went back to my born-again factory default. Since God is good, and since He does all things well, this conundrum must also be good. I quietly gave thanks for the struggle. Then I started over at the beginning from the correct default setting.

God established slavery as a requirement for my people hundreds of years in advance.

He told Abraham about it so we couldn't say we weren't informed, and we know God wasn't surprised. Slavery must have been necessary for us. Though Paul's letter to the Romans had not yet been written, the famous promise of verse 28 in chapter 8 is true.

“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Somehow, slavery was good because it was absolutely included in the plan of God for the ancient Jews. I didn't like the sound or feel of that conclusion. But I stuck with my default. If we needed to become slaves in Egypt, and to remain slaves for centuries, then God must have planned our servitude in Egypt with a divine purpose. Slavery was a requirement for God's salvation plan of the ages. If He required slavery for us, slavery must have been good. Somehow, I needed to find out why.

I felt like Gordo Gekko in Wall Street declaring “GREED IS GOOD!”⁵⁷ How could a 21st century author suggest, “SLAVERY IS GOOD” and still warrant a credible hearing by thinking believers? Well, to a slave, slavery is certainly not good. But I believe in a God Who can find purpose in all things . . . even circumstances that seem beyond redemption.

Suddenly, the light went on. We were in Egypt for more than 400 years, yet we retained our identity. The only thing that separated the Jews from the Egyptians was slavery.

57 [Gordon Gekko: “Greed is Good” \[HD\] - Bing video](#)

Slavery is what kept us from assimilating!

Slavery was the impassable bridge across which Jews were simply not allowed to travel to enter Egyptian society as an equal. The Jews were slaves. Slavery was the only thing that kept the Jews from becoming totally absorbed and integrated as Egyptians. Had the Jews not remained separate and distinct, even if only as slaves, we would have been lost to God's salvation plan of the ages. And the Jews were essential to that eternal purpose to which God had called us.

Without the barrier of slavery, the people of God might have been swallowed up by the people of Egypt. Moses might have run for City Council instead of running for his life. There may have been no distinct people to receive the Law, break the Law, or through which our Redeemer would have been born to deliver us from the guilt revealed in the Law. God's salvation plan of the ages included slavery as the tool that enabled us to remain identifiable as Jews in Egypt. It was the device that made it possible for us to be miraculously delivered by God from Egypt. To any individual slave, slavery may have been a nightmare. But to those of us set free from other forms of bondage, we are eternally grateful.

Modern slavery takes on many sinful forms.⁵⁸ Spiritually, millions remain in less visible, but just as burdensome chains. Alcoholism, drug addiction, pornography, webs of deceit, serial infidelity, and countless other forms of bondage continue to hold people captive. Nonetheless, freedom is absolutely available through the sacrifice of our Jewish Messiah. He redeems captives

58 Physical slavery still exists in the 21st century. And we should not ignore the plight of helpless girls, boys, men, and women who have been kidnapped, tricked, captured, bought, sold, or trafficked into slavery.

and breaks the chains that hold men and women in prisons of sin. Therefore, we give thanks for God's salvation plan of the ages. It came through Egypt, across the wilderness, and into the land of promise where God's love was made clear.

God's mercy continues to enable all who seek His forgiveness to find it through the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Many of us experience difficult challenges in life. Sometimes we ask God troublesome questions. But none of us should become mad at God because we don't find the answers we seek or like the ones proposed. When that happens, remember Randy's Rule of Theology #3:

GOD IS GOOD AND HE DOES ALL THINGS WELL.

The question I was forced to ask about myself was, "Did my anger over God's attitude toward the slaves cross the line into sin?" Yes, it did. I was angry at God without cause. God is just and has the right to judge any or all sinners. By asking some of the questions I asked, in the way I posed the questions, I was doubting God's inherent goodness. That is an unacceptable attitude for a believer. I am thankful that a quick reset and healthy default was permitted by God. He is good and He does all things well. Sin does lurk at our doorstep. It comes in many forms. It is a form of leaven that should never be welcomed or allowed to rise. There is no place for *hametz* in our life. Sin must be removed before it poisons our eternal soul.

ASSIMILATION AS A STRATEGY

Did you know that long before the Egyptians enslaved us, the Shechemites attempted to subdue the children of Israel through what I call the “embrace and engulf” technique? Their plan was to use assimilation as a strategy to erase God’s legacy for the children of Israel. Had the Shechemites succeeded, it would also have created irreparable havoc to God’s salvation plan of the ages. What began as an act of rape could have led to the destruction of the line of Judah. Our most famous kings, major sections of the Bible, and our Messiah was produced through the line of Judah. If this theory sounds incredible, read the account of the rape of Dinah in the 34th chapter of Genesis. I am not a conspiracy theorist. Yet dual conspiracies were simultaneously at work in that tragic event.

Shechem brutally raped Jacob’s daughter Dinah. Apparently, the incident caused him to fall head-over-heels in love with her.

“His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman . . . So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this young woman as a wife.” (Genesis 34:3a, 4)

On the surface, it appeared that Shechem’s father approached Dinah’s family to make amends.

“The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. So you shall dwell with us,

***and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it,
and acquire possessions for yourselves in it.”***

(Genesis 34:8b-10)

Jacob's family countered with religious concerns. Her brothers held deceptively vengeful plans of their own.

“But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. And they said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us. But on this condition we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.” *(Genesis 34:13-17)*

In a fascinating look behind the curtain, Scripture reveals the devious plot intended by the Shechemites. Their cunning plan to “embrace and engulf” was very subtle. They had an agenda to conquer the children of Israel through assimilation. The method was made clear.

“These men are at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us,

to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us.

(Genesis 34:21-24 emphasis added mine)

Their idea was to accept the Jewish demand for circumcision as an accommodation to the Jews. Their intent was to overcome them by having the children of Israel assimilate into the Shechemite community. The lineage for all of Israel's sons (including Judah), would have eventually become indistinguishable from the neighboring people. God's salvation plan of the ages would have been dealt an unholy and irreversible blow.

However, the sons of Israel had their own, even more devious conspiracy planned for the circumcision of the Shechemites. Their plan was to conquer and destroy.

“Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses” (Genesis 34:25-29)

While their enemies were incapacitated from the surgery, Dinah's brothers proceeded to annihilate every man who could have raised a sword against them.

Jacob's sons were justifiably furious over the rape of their sister. Their response was nonetheless horrifying and treacherous. **Yet their act of treachery also spared the children of Israel from becoming assimilated.** Instead of being lost to history, like so many of their ancient peers, the Twelve Tribes of Israel survived to become identified as the chosen people of God.

This biblical account caused me to reflect on other trends that might have led my people into oblivion or lost in the constantly changing milieu of history. It also startled me into evaluating the current milieu facing our modern culture.

People groups lose their identity in many ways. Once lost, it is unlikely to be restored. The Amorites, Perizzites, Hittites, Jebusites, Canaanites, and other "ites" of the ancient world have vanished.

It is a miracle that God's chosen people have been kept alive and distinct, while our ancient peers have been forgotten.

Cultures have been coming and going for millennia. Some perished through violent conquest. Others were extinguished due to internal collapse or natural disaster. What allows one society to thrive while another evaporates? How does one worldview overcome or figuratively disembowel another? I proposed one simple biblical example where accommodation almost led to assimilation.

The ancient Shechemites tried to embrace and engulf the Jews. They failed quickly. The Babylonians famously tried to dominate and enslave the Jews. They failed slowly because we survived but they didn't. The Nazis tried to conquer and destroy the Jews. They failed monumentally. What about the Egyptians? We know that the Egyptians hated the Jews even before we were enslaved. As early as the time of Joseph, the Egyptian servants of Joseph refused to eat at the same table with Joseph's brothers,

“Because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them.” (Genesis 43:32b NLT)

The tremendous success of Egypt's economy under Joseph's leadership may have amplified the divide between Jews and Egyptians. The Jews thrived during the time of Joseph's favor. They,

“Acquired property, and they were fruitful, and their population grew rapidly.” (Genesis 47:27 NLT)

Making matters worse, the non-Jewish Egyptians became very poor during the lean years of Egypt's drought. Joseph was credited with transferring the financial wealth of Egypt's citizens into Pharaoh's treasure chest (Genesis 47:20). Joseph also secured the vast land mass for Pharaoh that had become barren and unable to produce during Egypt's famine. The recently impoverished peasant class of Egypt might have held their losses against Joseph and his Jewish family. He was simply doing his job. He did it well to the detriment of the underclass for the benefit of the King.⁵⁹

59 Although not all translations agree, several versions suggest that Joseph “made the

Joseph was born to be the greatest mind in all of Egypt. And the children of Israel were called to enjoy their season of prosperity, just as the later generations were called to play their role in God's plan as slaves, until, in God's time,

“they became too mighty for their enemies. Then he turned the Egyptians against the Israelites, and they plotted against the LORD’s servants.”

(Psalms 105:24b-25 NLT)

I'm still not sure how Pharaoh enslaved the Jews of Egypt. He appears to have found a more productive, less bloody method. Was any mass slaughter of Jews in Egypt recorded before they entered slavery? Were any reports of Egyptian armies marching from the Gentile realm of Egypt into the Jewish region of Egypt ever memorialized? Were any recollections of violent Jewish protest noted against the enslavement by the Egyptians? I am unaware of any such events.

It is known that Pharaoh feared a Jewish uprising. That was what led Him to establish the barrier of slavery that kept the Jews from taking over through revolt. It also stopped them from assimilating through default. I know we were enslaved. The Bible is emphatic about this fact. But I don't know how. Some tragic reversal of fortunes transposed the wealthy Jews into slaves and enabled the robust economy of Egypt to thrive through both Jewish slave labor and some form of an Egyptian peasant class. But the Jews had been living the high life in Egypt until the time they were shoved to the lowest rung of society.

people virtual slaves” (Genesis 47:21 NKJV footnote).

How did this radical transformation happen? The process may have been akin to the old story of boiling a frog. The story goes that if a frog is placed in a pot of boiling water, the frog would immediately jump out of the pot. But if the same frog were placed in a pot of comfy-cozy water, it would have no reason to hop out. And if the water temperature were raised very, very slowly, the frog would eventually succumb and be boiled alive. Did we succumb to Pharaoh like a frog? Were we enslaved by degrees? Was Pharaoh calculated like Hitler?

Did Pharaoh legislate our rights away from the Jews one-by-one like Hitler did prior to WWII?

In Germany, the Jews had diligently worked to fit in. The totally successful assimilation of the Jews in Germany created a false sense of security for my people. We were solid citizens of Europe. We served in the German military. We were leaders in German society and business. We did not want trouble. We were always willing to accommodate. We wanted to be like everyone else. Through legislation, the growing Nazi party removed some of our rights peacefully. Later, more Nazi power led to more rights being stripped from the Jews by Hitler. His goons began to intimidate the Jews as their legal status deteriorated and Hitler's powers expanded.

By November of 1938, *Krsytallnacht* brought the worst pogroms experienced by the Jews. Through religious bigotry, greed, violence, and a national propaganda campaign, the Nazis turned the entire nation against Germany's Jewish citizens. Passports, weapons, monies, properties, valuables of all sort, were taken from the Jews by the Nazi controlled government.

They incapacitated the Jewish people in anticipation of the annihilation of the entire Jewish race. The norms of German society were changed by the power and influence of the Nazis.

Hitler began his “public service” within a fringe political party. The National Socialist German Worker’s Party was a tiny minority of extreme nationalists and anti-Semites. Hitler’s little lunatic fringe group evolved from the margins of German society. This vocal, organized minority of radical Aryans cunningly took over the conscience of the German nation. The Nazis almost conquered the free world while the Allies dismissed their obvious evil agenda. It didn’t happen immediately. It happened in carefully orchestrated stages. Just as a frog might remain in water slowly being brought to a boil, the measured cadence of change may have allowed the German population to accept the destruction of millions of Jews and other hated minorities. Perhaps hated minorities deserve our deeper consideration?

MINORITY VIEWS, FROG BOILS, AND A PASSOVER DETOUR?

These next brief comments may feel disjointed or perhaps even unwelcome in a text about Passover. Consider this a short Passover detour. Feel free to jump ahead a few pages if your sensibilities cannot tolerate bigotry, racism, slavery, slaughter, or whispers of conspiracy. My people have experienced each of these despicable realities. I am perplexed with my own questions. Why were my people subjugated into slavery by the Egyptians? I don’t understand how it happened. My people were also subjugated into slavery by the Nazis. My relatives were rounded up and branded with numbers like animals. They were thrown

into cattle cars and hauled off to slave labor gangs and death camps. It seems incredible that such atrocities could have happened in a modern, civilized, Christian society. Minorities have reason to be concerned when the majority accumulates too much power.

**Could the unimaginable occur? Could a former majority group be relegated to a disenfranchised minority? If so, how would it survive?
THIS IS US!**

Said differently, are Bible-believing Christians and Jews at risk of becoming an unprotected, unwanted class of people? America was admittedly a Judeo-Christian country formed on biblical presuppositions.

What was true at our founding, and true through our flourishing, may not remain true for our falling.

America is rapidly becoming a post-Christian nation. If this trend continues, what will become of us? **Are we relics of faith that no longer fit in the new America? Are we witnessing a frog boil in America?**

Dare I ask if we are becoming acclimated to the social, political, and moral boil coming our way? As people committed to the Bible, are we like the frog slowly being boiled in comfy-cozy water?⁶⁰ For our purposes, I am referring to people who

⁶⁰ I have used the frog boil analogy loosely. For biology majors or people who enjoy nicely sauteed frog legs, I must say that I don't believe a cold-blooded amphibian could be fooled by a slow boil. People who merely dip their toe into the waters of faith

love the God of Israel and believe the Bible to be God's Word for mankind. Given the many flavors of social, religious, and political disagreement, it is reasonable to ask how minority views have quickly advanced into majority policies? For example, homosexuality was once considered immoral by nearly all citizens of America. Even homosexuals hid their conduct because it was understood to be aberrant behavior that brought shame to the individuals and disgust to society. People knew the Bible called such behavior an abomination. It was also obvious that homosexuality was abnormal when compared to the natural order of life and procreation. That was why it brought humiliation when homosexual behavior was discovered. In fact, sodomy was often illegal. Nevertheless, we all realize that homosexuality has morphed into a cause to bring change to social, religious, and legislative policies. Some work for the day when an openly homosexual president will be elected. If that day comes, what becomes of our nation's foundation built on biblical morality? Homosexual activists are no longer satisfied "coming out of the closet." Some want to lock vocal heterosexuals in the closet where disparate views can be silenced. And some view the biblical language prohibiting homosexuality as hate speech.

How did the moral sea change accelerate to the current damning degree? Perhaps the turning point could be identified by taking a look back to recall despicable early hate crimes against homosexuals from the last century. Some burly straight guys assaulted someone believed to be homosexual. Most sane people agree that nobody should harm, torment, or kill a homosexual person in modern society (excluding Islamic nations where

might also hop out to save their skin if things get too hot for their comfort. We do well to remember that there are worse things than martyrdom.

homosexuals are harmed, tormented, or killed according to Muslim law). Even though the Bible suggests some sexual sins are best managed through horribly harsh punishments, our culture rejects such treatment of fornicators, adulterers, or homosexuals, etc.⁶¹ Neanderthal gay-bashers set the stage for a movement to outlaw gay-bashing. This was a rational response to irrational hate crimes. Homosexuals should be protected just like all law-abiding citizens. We all deserve protection under the law.

Homosexuality happened to be a minority problem. Even calling it a “problem” can now be considered inappropriate by some moderns. The vocal homosexual minority successfully advanced their minority views into becoming a policy issue to be embraced by a segment of the majority. In other words, straight people have taken on the cause of gay people. Who would argue with the premise that it is wrong to torture or kill a homosexual? The idea is abhorrent and barbaric. Such general agreement became a steppingstone for the minority to secure additional protections for their minority class. Each step on the path toward erasing inequality moved the minority closer to their goal of full equality. **Sadly, not even Hollywood can convert a biblical abomination into a righteous cause.** Homosexuality may be celebrated on screen, on stage, in art, and even in Congress, but God still condemns it.

For clarity, I believe in equality before the law. I believe in tolerance. I believe people have the right to live as homosexuals. I believe homosexuals have the right to reject the Bible. I am not

61 It should be noted that Moses declared taking the name of God in vain to be a capital crime punishable by death (Leviticus 24:16). If the biblical legal code was employed, most of Congress, the NFL, and many members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Union would be hiding from the hangman. Maybe that is why mothers tell their children to watch their mouths. They might grow up to be politicians or late-night comedians?

intolerant. I am not homophobic. I simply reject the rhetoric of some homosexual activists who would demand I support their behavior or call it normal. It must be abnormal because the Bible deems it otherwise.

Of course, not everyone believes the Bible. So, it is absurd to assume those who do not should be expected to follow the standards declared in a book they reject. However, it is also absurd that those who reject the Bible should presume the rest should abandon their biblical beliefs simply because it makes them uncomfortable.

Comfort is not an inalienable right or an expectation guaranteed by our Constitution.

Do the right things and you might find comfort. Do the wrong things and it will likely allude you. If a homosexual insists on being comfortable in a sinful habit, their comfort is best protected by not asking a Bible-believer if it's OK to flaunt a sinful practice. If you want to remain comfortable, quit sinning or don't ask a person who believes the Bible for their opinion about sin. Homosexuals do not require our approval. Why should they demand our acceptance? Why can't we just agree to disagree about such things and be nice to each other in spite of our differences?

Homosexuality has found its pathway to becoming mainstream. Supporters of homosexuality have successfully advocated for social, religious, and legislative policy changes advancing the cause of homosexuality across our nation and within numerous so-called Christian denominations. What was previously labeled simply as "gay" became a modern alliance known as LGBT. Soon, other sexual "minorities" opposed to

biblical norms teamed up to advance the cause of additional aberrations.

As of this writing, the abbreviated “label” has expanded to LGBTQQ1P2SAA.⁶² It was necessary to include smaller, and smaller subsets of confused sexual oddities. If the perversions continue to expand, the abbreviations may soon require billboards instead of bumper stickers to support each new group seeking synergistic support for their behavior. Privately, do some of their leaders wonder which sexual deviants cross the line and must be voted off the label? Is any perversion considered sinful or disgusting?

If you forgot what led to this rather odd rabbit trail, it was the proposal of ancient methods to conquer and enslave. I now believe things haven’t changed that much. We are often asked to accommodate those who reject biblical norms. Accommodation should not lead to a fundamental acceptance of that which is morally unacceptable.

Tolerance should not require a surrender of our biblical values. If tolerant desires to accommodate are confused with our requirement to remain distinct, we risk being swallowed through assimilation.

Christians and Jews must remain vigilant to never assimilate

⁶² Shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, 2-spirited, asexual, and allies. It seems they didn’t want to leave out any fringe elements from the margins of their sexually confused universe. Given enough time, the “allies” may include deviants prone to bestiality, pedophilia, necrophilia, and polygamy. Why not? Left to their own devices, they may take over society. Some lobbying groups already promote some of these perversions in efforts to stretch the limits of normalcy and seek legal protections. My concern is that they may attempt to pummel the rest of our culture into submission through the demand for “tolerance.”

and become lost to the distinctive call to live as God's chosen. There is a highly activist element among the anti-biblical minority who attempt to incapacitate those who support and promote biblical norms because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Christians should not make sinners uncomfortable. Eventually, sin will make a sinner more uncomfortable than we are capable. When a sinner finally regrets his/her sin, we should invite them to encounter our Messiah. We should invite the Spirit of God to address the sin problem. We should expect God to convict, to convince, and to connect the sinner to the Savior. We must love and point people to God. If we simply let God be God, He will! Meanwhile, if any unrepentant sinners are reading this, my advice is to avoid getting too cozy with your sin. Guilt and shame are proper responses to ungodly behavior. It should lead to repentance, not social upheaval. Believers must retain their right to remain intractably committed to the moral standards demanded in Scripture. If we hold to biblical truths, we may be misunderstood. We may face rejection in a changing culture. This should not be a surprise. The foundational status of the Bible itself is under attack.

Some believers have felt the fury with which the anti-biblical minority has tried to intimidate believers. There is an overt intent to change laws, norms, entertainment standards, and government policies to undermine biblical norms of morality. Where the precepts of the Bible become obstacles to the unfettered pursuit of immoral choices, an anti-biblical minority is working to remove the Bible's influence and promote unbiblical lifestyle choices.

I am not saying gay people want to dominate everyone. Neither am I saying gay people want everyone to be gay. I do

believe some want our society to validate their gay lifestyle choices. However, to grant that validation in light of biblical standards, is to contradict the foundational beliefs of sexuality presented in the Bible. Therefore, I reject any radical gay agenda that presumes to go beyond raising a rainbow flag or shining rainbow lights on the outside of the White House. And I hope they fail to influence legislation from inside the White House. If such minority causes succeed in becoming majority expectations, those of us who kindly tolerate such behavior in a free country may find ourselves subject to a new form of discrimination in a country with less freedom. If our desire to honor God and promote the Bible is eventually deemed to be intolerant, we may find our norms to be unwelcome, unacceptable, or God forbid, unlawful. The current trend toward eradicating the obvious distinctions between male and female has elevated our society's race toward gender confusion. Erasing gender specific language cannot change the way God created men and women. But it can create division and dissent between those who believe the Bible and those who reject its influence. When the censors of society are given the right to decide what is fit for consumption by a society, that society is no longer truly free. Rather, it is subject to the arbiters of our freedom.

When the Bible becomes hate speech, faith in the Bible becomes dangerous. Even the content of this simple book could become classified into something it was never intended to be. Anyone could be censored when opinions based on biblical standards become unwelcome. It is now recognized that no one is free from censorship. Even sitting Presidents of the United States are not immune from being silenced by social media. No one is quite sure who should control the reigns of censorship. But nobody wants to be the one who is censored.

This detour presented concerns about people and nations becoming desensitized to sin. As the Bible loses influence, the culture's moral compass becomes untrustworthy. When a people are led by immoral adjudicators who can no longer recognize the difference between boys and girls, how can such a people be expected to determine right from wrong in the affairs of government? Such a lack of good judgment now appears to be common. Such confusion is now heralded as forward-thinking and respectable. The ancient Hebrew prophet Isaiah warned,

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.” (Isaiah 5:20-21 NIV)

Such descriptions seem to mirror our nation's Congress, some of its courtrooms, and much of its media. These are symptoms of a sin-sick society in need of repentance, forgiveness, and atonement. We all need mercy. Without it, we will face God's wrath. None of us are perfect. We have all sinned. We have therefore, all earned judgment. My judgment is that this detour about minorities must end. And our future as believers in America must progress toward active faith and vibrant practice. Thereby we can best protect our rights by exercising them and working toward revival in our land. Today, we can still celebrate as God instructs.

Having posed these awkward questions on this curious detour. I must now invite my readers to rejoin our twisted journey that is almost complete. We are very close to our Passover *seder*

destination. I promised to guide us to a sanctified ritual without being swallowed by retail religion. I have asked challenging questions, proposed challenging conclusions, and I still require some grace from my readers as we reach the end of our Passover Backstory.

Again, I ask a question posed earlier in this section of many questions. Where's the *hametz*?

WHERE IS THE LEAVEN IN MY LIFE?

IN CONCLUSION:

We all have leaven in our life. We might think we can hide or sell our leaven, but it is revealed to any honest person that asks God for truth about their own spiritual condition.

**Nobody with leaven can truly take your leaven.
It merely leaves two people with leaven.
You see, one sinner cannot bear the sins of
another sinner.**

Without blood on the doorpost, we bear our own penalties for our own disobedience. Herein is the true purpose of Passover. God made a way for us out of Egypt. He also made a way for us to be *pesahdik*. If you really want to be kosher for Passover, the only rabbi who can effectively take away your leaven is the perfect, sinless, rabbi who could afford the incredibly high price that we could never pay. Jesus, the Passover lamb of God, came to take

away our sins. This is the only viable exchange that satisfies God. Most rabbis reject the concept.

I propose that a blood sacrifice in exchange for sin is more realistic than money changing hands to temporarily hide our leaven.

As far back as Israel's wanderings in the desert, God made clear,

"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 the soul." (*Leviticus 17:11 TLB*)

Later, the Bible described an entire system of sacrifices that fell off the calendar long ago when the Temple fell, and our sacrificial altar was destroyed. Most calendars now turn on the fulcrum of the Resurrection of a man from that same time. That man allowed His blood to be shed for us. That sinless man was a spotless lamb. In my view, that is the only viable exchange that satisfies. His is the blood that covers us from the destroyer and delivers us forever.

SECTION THREE

DO IT YOURSELF PASSOVER





DO IT YOURSELF **PASSOVER**

A CHRISTIAN "HOW-TO" MANUAL
FOR A BIBLICAL CELEBRATION
ENJOYED BY JESUS

- DR. RANDY WEISS -

PREPARING FOR OUR SEDER: PASSOVER ITEMS NEEDED FOR HEAD TABLE

1. Extra chair for Elijah
2. Candlestick & candles
3. Pillow on which to lean
4. 3 pieces of Matzah for discussion
5. Matzah tash (typically with sleeves for 3 pieces)
6. Seder Plate to display the required elements
 - *Matzah*
 - *Roasted lamb shank bone*
 - *Roasted egg*
 - *Bitter herbs—Horseradish*
 - *Parsley*
 - *Bowl of Charoses (many simple recipes are available online)*
 - *Bowl of saltwater*
 - *Hard-boiled egg*
7. Large wine goblet for Elijah's Cup, his chair, and his extra place setting
8. Pitcher of water with towel (in large public seder gatherings, we've set out hand sanitizers on each table instead of water to avoid the chaos and mess)
9. Wine glass/goblet
10. Grape Juice
11. Napkins
12. Place setting for each guest with ample juice, matzah, seder elements, napkins, saltwater

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OUR CELEBRATION.

Gut Yontif—Happy Holiday (Yiddish)

In Hebrew we say *Chag Samayach* “Have a joyous festival.”

The Passover season is pregnant with messianic expectation. We consider the worldwide need for deliverance and the universal cry for *shalom*—peace? Without our Messiah, there is only turmoil, fear, or even worse . . . the false hope presented by false belief systems. But we know our God--the Lord of glory. He delivered us from Egypt.

Does that sound strange? Have you ever been to Egypt? How were we delivered from a place most of us have never lived? We will learn how as we remember Egypt and the ancient children of Israel. But we are never to be brought into bondage again. And we are here to honor the God of Israel. He sent a Redeemer when we most needed Him.

Prior to beginning a public *seder*, I like to ask a few questions of the group to learn about our audience. Leaders who use this *haggadah* for their own *seder*, or in large groups, may also find this beneficial.

- ▶ **Who in attendance is Jewish?**
- ▶ **Have any of our guests ever been to a Passover seder?**
- ▶ **Do we have any visiting pastors/evangelists/missionaries joining us?** *If so, take what you learn back to those who may not understand these things. You can help bridge the gap between Jews and Christians by helping those you influence understand the important connection between ancient Judaism and modern Christianity. Most importantly, a seder is the number one most celebrated annual Jewish event. Christians should embrace this opportunity to become better equipped to relate to their Jewish friends. It is a beautiful way to show respect for their heritage.*
- ▶ **If you know Hebrew, please join in.** *If not, no worries, English transliterations (phonetic “cheat sheets”) are provided for many of the blessings.*
- ▶ **This is an open seder and all are welcome.** *I am delighted you decided to join us, and I do not want to offend anyone. So, I do need to mention that when*

we share our 4th cup at the end of the evening, we will be partaking in an open communion. Please reflect on this prior to that time. If your heart is not prepared to take communion, or if the idea is awkward for you, we can talk privately. I do hope you will make your peace with God and enjoy His forgiveness in advance of sharing the final cup. Of course, that is a totally personal matter. But I want to assure you that God loves you, He welcomes you, and this entire event is about His marvelous goodness and deliverance. If you feel distant from God, I invite you to draw near to Him tonight. If you do not have a church home, I am certain that someone in this gathering will welcome you to theirs and help you understand Who Jesus is and what He has done. If you have such questions, tonight is a good time to ask them.

- ▶ **Please be aware if you have food allergies that the charoses does include nuts.**
- ▶ **Each seder table requires a table leader to make sure certain things take place.**
- ▶ **We will wash our hands during the service.** *Table leaders make sure the water & towels make the rounds.*
- ▶ **We will drink 4 cups of wine or grape juice tonight.** *It is only necessary to add a few ounces to each cup. But we will refill our glasses with a small amount after each cup.*

- ▶ **Table leaders try to keep order so that all can hear about each of the elements of the seder and help us recite the Passover blessings.**
Thereby, all in attendance receive a blessing.

AND NOW LET US BEGIN:

DO IT YOURSELF **PASSOVER**

A CHRISTIAN "HOW-TO" MANUAL
FOR A BIBLICAL CELEBRATION
ENJOYED BY JESUS

- DR. RANDY WEISS -

WELCOME TO OUR PASSOVER *SEDER*.

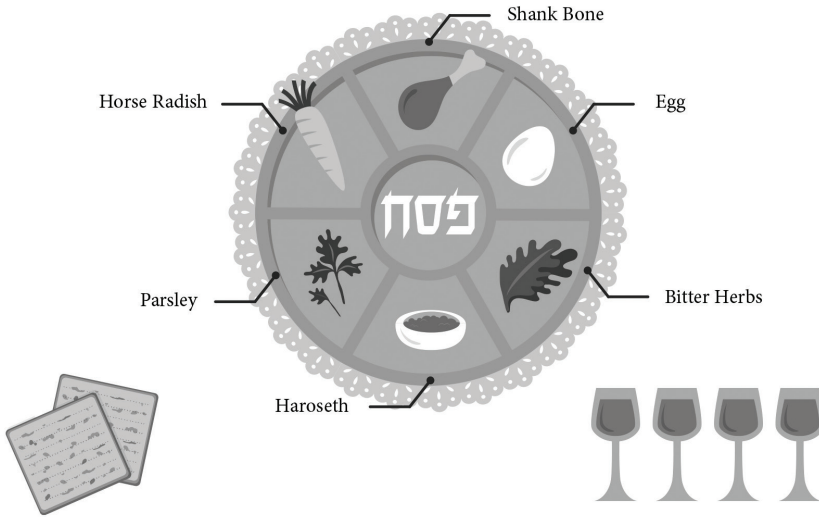
Seder means “order.” This *seder* will not be as long as those celebrated with my grandparents or my parents. We will use more English and less Hebrew. We will be less formal and more fluid. But we will do what every generation of Jews has done since Moses.

My family celebrates *Pesach*—Passover a little differently than most Jewish families. I wrote this liturgy to help us carry on a tradition that must be remembered. In this way, the knowledge of God’s faithfulness is shared with the next generation. As we say in Hebrew, *Lador vador*, from generation-to-generation. To preserve our future, we share our past.

I pray the cycle never ceases and we learn to entrust this tradition to succeeding generations.

Why do we use a *haggadah* at Passover? So we can *seder* right words. 😊

WHAT'S ON YOUR SEDER PLATE?



SEDER PLATE EXPLAINED

Each of these festival elements are symbolic. But if the symbols aren't understood, we fail to inform and educate the next generation about our shared history. BTW--The foods on the *Seder* plate are **not** eaten.¹ And if you have food allergies, the *charoses* does contain nuts.

||| **Zeroa:** Roasted lamb shank bone symbolizes the Passover lamb that was sacrificed, also known as the *korban pesach*. It was roasted and eaten in a fraternal gathering on the night of the Passover *seder*.²

Baytza: Some scholars believe the roasted egg represents an expression of mourning for our destroyed Temple. Others will say that the roasted egg represents eternal life and the renewal of springtime. OK, if it makes you feel good, and the cycle of life idea works for you, have a nice zen-like festival. The view to which I adhere (and believe makes historical and theological sense) suggests that the egg symbolizes the *korban chagigah*. At each of the pilgrimage festivals during the second Temple era, a festival sacrifice was eaten in larger groups.³ The first lamb was to be eaten entirely with no leftovers. This additional festival lamb, the *chagigah*, could be eaten during the second day if not used up at the *seder* (Passover “doggie-bags”).

Karpas: This represents the hyssop that was used to wipe the blood of the lamb on the doorpost. It was by this blood applied to the Jewish homes that the angel of death knew to “pass over” Jewish dwellings. The vegetable used might be parsley, celery, or even a radish. It is dipped in saltwater (which represents the tears shed by our people).

Charoses: The children of Israel were forced to make bricks for Pharaoh. This mixture of chopped apples, nuts, wine, and spices serves to remind us of the mortar used in Egypt. PLEASE NOTE: A group of leading medical professionals have published a report warning that *seder* participants should not partake of both chopped liver and *charoses* together. Their findings suggest that doing so can lead to *charoses* of the liver. ☺

Maror: The bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness of slavery. Although my family normally uses horseradish, the rabbis list their preferences as follows: romaine, horseradish, endive, or escarole. The logic is that the romaine first tastes sweet and then becomes bitter. The same was true for our experience in Egypt. It was pretty sweet at the start but became bitter under the later Pharaohs.

Hazeret: This element is sometimes added as additional *maror*. It is for the Hillel sandwich—*koreikh*. This consists of a piece of the bottom *matzah* mixed with bitter herbs. Numbers 9:11 speaks of “herbs” as plural. Not a bitter herb.⁴ So the *hazeret* may serve as a “belt and suspenders” in the world of bitter herbs. But we just use another sliver of horseradish.

Modern Jews have enhanced their festival experience and reflect their flavor of social activism. The 5th Child is an example added to many modern *haggadot* after WWII to honor children slain during the Nazi Holocaust. Just as I have altered our *seder* with comparisons between the Passover lamb and

“The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,”

(Rev.13:8)

others promote different agendas with more radical intentions.⁵

CANDLES LIT TO WELCOME OUR FESTIVAL⁶

So now, we will ask the Momma (or any female) to recite the blessing and light our candles to welcome in this wonderful festival (or Sabbath). God said, “Let there be light.” And with the Lord, Momma makes light too.

[The Hebrew name of God is often replaced with an abbreviation by observant Jewish people to avoid desecrating His Holy Name. Throughout this text, ‘**ה**’ is used.]

[Words in brackets are typically added when the festival is celebrated on the Sabbath.]

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל [שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל] יוֹם
טוֹב

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, asher
kid'shanu, b'mitzvotav, v'tzivahnu, l'hadlik nayr shel [Shabbat
v'] Yom Tov.*

Mother: “Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us through Thy commandments and instructed us to kindle the holiday candles. Amen.”⁷

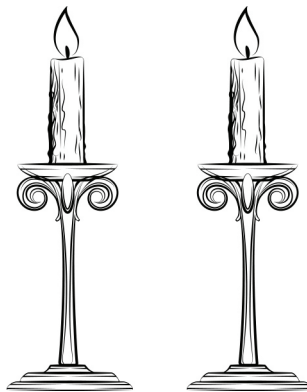
[We usually move our candles off the seder table to avoid unexpected visits from the fire department. but each family is free to test the odds when the dash is made for the afikomen if the candles are nearby. let us know how that works out for you?]

QUESTION:

Why does Momma draw her hands toward her face and cover her eyes during lighting?

ANSWER:

Waving our hands around the candles toward our eyes serves to usher in the “Sabbath bride.” The rabbinic view dealing with the touchy issue of when the festival or Sabbath technically begins is quite serious. Therefore, our eyes are closed to avoid seeing the light just in case it started before we got done lighting the candles. When we open our eyes, voila, the candles are already lit, and we are not guilty of a Sabbath prohibition.⁸



קִדּוּשׁ (KIDDUSH for Passover)

(If festival is on Friday night [Sabbath],
the following brief section is added.)

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר

יּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי. וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם. וַיְכַל
אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ
אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אוֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבֹת
מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת

*Vay'hi erev vay'hi voker yom hashishi. Vay'chulu hashamayim
v'haaretz v'chol tzva'am. Vay'chal Elohim bayom hashvi'i
M'lachto asher asah, vayishbot bayom hashvi'i mikol mlachto
asher asah. Vay'vareich Elohim et yom hashvi'i vay'kadeish oto,
ki vo shavat mikol m'lachto, asher bara Elohim la'asot.*

And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God had finished His work which He had made: and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work, which God had created in order to make it.

(If the festival is on another night of the week, begin here:)

סְבָרֵי מָרְנֹו וְרִבְנֹו וְרִבּוֹת

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוֹ
מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל־לְשׁוֹן וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו.
וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (לשבת: שְׁבֹתוֹת
לְמַנוּחָה ו) מוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן
אֶת יוֹם (לשבת הַשְּׁבֹת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם) חַג הַמִּצּוֹת
הַזֶּה זְמַן חֲרוּתֵנוּ (לשבת בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קִדְּשׁ זִכָּר
לִיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֵרֶת וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל
הָעַמִּים (לשבת: וְשֹׁבֹת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קִדְּשָׁה (לשבת
בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן) בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הַנְּחֻלָּתָנוּ
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מִקְדִּישׁ (לשבת: הַשְּׁבֹת ו) יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְהַזְּמַנִּים

READER:

Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the Universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed art Thou, Eternal
our God, King of the universe, who selected us from
among all people, and exalted us among all tongues, and
hallowed us with Thy commandments. Lovingly Thou
hast given us, Lord our God, [Sabbath days of rest and]
times for joy, [this Sabbath and the day of] celebration,

and this festival of *Matzoth* for the anniversary of our becoming free—a sacred occasion, a remembrance of our release from Egypt. For us didst Thou select, and ourselves didst Thou hallow among all peoples. It has been Thy loving will to bestow on us Thy [Sabbath and] sanctified holidays, for joy and gladness [in love and favor]. Blessed art Thou, Lord, who sanctifies [the Sabbath and] Israel, and the holidays.

Savri maranan verabanan verabosai

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, boray p'ri hagafen. Amen.

(On Shabbat--Friday night add text in parenthesis)

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher bachar banu mikolam, v'rom'manu mikol-lashon, v'kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, vatiten-lanu Adonai Eloheinu b'ahavah (shabbatot limnucha u') moadim l'simchah, chagim uz'manim l'sason et-yom (hashabbat hazah v'et-yom) chag hamatzot hazeh. Z'man cheiruteinu, (b'ahavah) mikra kodesh, zeicher litziat mitzrayim. Ki vanu vacharta v'otanu kidashta mikolha'amim. (v'shabbat) umo'adei kod'shecha (b'ahavah uvratzon) b'simchah uv'sason hinchaltanu. Baruch Atah Adonai, m'kadeish (hashabbat v') Yisrael v'hazmanim.

4 CUPS OF WINE FOR OUR PASSOVER SEDER?

Some believe that four cups of wine are enjoyed in a *seder* in remembrance of the four aspects of redemption God promised in Exodus 6:6-7. Each aspect of God's deliverance is celebrated. We will sip four cups of wine (grape juice). This interpretation is not universally agreed.⁹ But no one should doubt God's liberating deliverance.



1ST CUP TO LIBERATION

- *I WILL FREE YOU FROM YOUR BURDENS IN EGYPT.*

2ND CUP TO DELIVERANCE

- *I WILL DELIVER YOU FROM SLAVERY.*

3RD CUP OF BLESSING/REDEMPTION

- *I WILL REDEEM YOU.*

4TH CUP OF COMPLETION INTO TRUE FREEDOM

- *I WILL TAKE YOU TO BE MY PEOPLE.*

“Wherefore say unto the children of Israel: I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments; and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”

(Ex. 6:6-7 JPS)

OUR 1ST CUP OF WINE *KIDDUSH* TO LIBERATION.

**Together we will recite the Hebrew blessing
and drink 1st Cup.**

*(Recline leaning left. I apologize to my hyper-conservative
friends. It's tradition, not a liberal political thing)*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, boray p'ri
ha-gafen. Amen.*

ALL:

“Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the universe,
creator of the fruit of the vine. Amen.”

SHEHECHEYANU (GOD) HAS GIVEN US LIFE

Now we add a very special blessing that is recited on 17 different
occasions. It is called the *Shehecheyanu*.¹⁰

**בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחְיֵנוּ
וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה.**

*Baruch atta Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, sheh'hech'yanu
v'kiy'manu, v'hig'yanu laz'man hazeh.*

ALL:

“Praised are You, Lord, our God, whose Presence fills the universe, who has given us life and strength and enabled us to reach this moment of joy.”¹¹

The *Shecheyanu* reminds us of the transitory nature of existence. We reflect on the continuous wonder of being alive. It is intentionally NOT recited on the last two nights of Passover because this portion of the festival has come to commemorate the crossing of the Red Sea. We omit this prayer so as not to forsake the command of Proverbs 24:17-18. “***Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles.***” We choose to not rejoice while the Egyptians were drowning.



וְרַחֵץ URCHATZ (Leader wash hands.)

(No blessing spoken.)¹²



כַּרְפַּס KARPAS *Hyssop*

READER:

Ex. 12:22a--“And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel, and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin.”

ALL:

Dip parsley into saltwater and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי
הָאֲדָמָה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, boray p'ri ha-
adamah.*

Blessed art Thou, O Eternal, our God, King of the
universe, Creator of the fruits of the earth.



יַחַץ YACHATZ (*Break the Middle Matzah*)

The *Aphikomen* is our middle *matzah*. One meaning for the term is “that which comes after.” Some view it as similar to dessert. When considering the Messiah, who will certainly “come after,” this symbolism is profound.

According to the rabbis, this broken *Aphikomen* is representative of the Passover lamb.¹³ It is broken at this point in the *seder* and we hide it away. Later in the service, it will be revealed again when it is ransomed after our meal, prior to the conclusion of the service.

Many have identified the obvious symbolism of Jesus in the *matzah*. Just like Jesus, our *matzah* is striped and it is pierced. I love that, however intellectual honesty demands I tell you the truth. Do you know why this *matzah* is striped and pierced? That is how *Manischewitz* © made it.

HOLD UP MIDDLE MATZAH

LEADER:

This unleavened bread is broken for us. Part of it will be recognized and on display. Part of it will be hidden from view. When it is time for the *Aphikomen*, at the end of this service, we will partake of this unleavened bread. Remember, *Aphikomen* means “that which comes after.”¹⁴ Our Messiah declared,

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35 TLV)

A perfect lamb was led to the slaughter. The Hebrew Prophet Isaiah described Him so we would know Him when He was revealed.

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.” (Isaiah 53:5-8).

EXPLAIN 3 MATZOTH

Lechem oni “bread of affliction” becomes the *afikomen*. It will be a reminder of our Blessed Hope when served as our Communion at the conclusion of our *seder*.¹⁵

Before me are three *matzoth*. Some believe the first represents the priests of the Temple, the *Kohanim*, the second, symbolizes the singers and servitors of the Temple known as the *Levi-im*, and last, the congregation of Israel, the *Yisraelim*. Another interpretation that I like suggests that two of these *matzoth*, the upper and the lower, represent the loaves of shewbread on display in the Temple, while the third *matzah*, the middle one, symbolizes the paschal lamb. Since the Passover sanctification was no longer possible after the destruction of the Temple, a piece of *matzah*, in addition to the bone, both came to represent the lamb. A third alternative is also excellent.

READER:

One Jewish thinker suggests: “If one of the three *matzot* signifies our liberation from Egypt, and the second the messianic redemption yet to come, the middle *matzah* stands for our present situation in between. We break off a piece and hide it, as redemption is still hidden from us—though, because of Exodus, we know that it is there—and before the end we certainly find it, and all eat of it and so taste the redemption yet to come. And it will be with the taste of that *afikomen* that we will leave the *seder*, as if to go with the taste of redemption on our lips.”¹⁶

HOLD MATZAH TASH UP **מגיד** MAGGID

MAGGID - TELLING THE STORY

We now tell the story. It begins in ancient Aramaic.¹⁷ Visitors were often invited to join in the family *seder* and Aramaic would have likely been the language in which the story was communicated. So this portion of the Passover story is retold in Aramaic.¹⁸ (Reveal Matzah for all to see and begin *Haggadah*.)

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָא דִּי אֶכְלוּ אַבְהֵתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא
דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכֹל, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ
יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּאַרְעָא
דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָא עַבְדִּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּנִי חוֹרִין

Ha lachma anya d'achalu avatana b'ara d'mitzraim

ALL:

“This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt; let all who are hungry, come and eat! Whoever is in need, come and celebrate Passover. Today here, but next year, in the land of Israel as sons of freedom.”

LEADER:

In the Apocrypha, Passover was called the “*feast of sweet bread.*” (1st Esdras 1:19) It is sweet to all who know the sweet taste of freedom. But we must remember the slavery from which we’ve been redeemed.

Affliction and sweetness make sense in the context of sacrifice and salvation. Our Passover Lamb was afflicted. When our names were inscribed in the Lamb’s book of life--the *sefer chaim*, His affliction became sweet to the redeemed. The Lamb,

“Slain from the foundation of the world.”

(Revelation 13:8b)

BTW, do you know what they call a person who derives pleasure from the bread of affliction?

A matzochist. 😊

THE FOUR QUESTIONS - *Feer Kashas*

Free people ask questions. We continue our *seder* with questions. The custom is that one of the youngsters at the table chants the Four Questions in Hebrew. Since we all should ask and answer these questions, if you know the chant, sing-along when it is sung in Hebrew:

ALL:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

- ▶ *On all other nights, we eat leavened bread and matzah, but on this night, we eat only matzah.*
- ▶ *On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night, we eat mainly 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 sitting straight or reclining, but on this night, we all recline.*

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת:

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֲמִץ וּמָצָה, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה – כֹּל מַצָּה

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יֵרַקוֹת – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כֹּל מְרוֹר

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אֶפְילוּ פַעַם אַחַת – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פַעַמִּים

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלְנוּ מְסֻבִּין

TRANSLITERATION OF THE FOUR QUESTIONS

(Everyone is welcome to participate. Sections in parenthesis are repeated where shown during chant.)

Mah nishtanah halaylah hazeh mikol haleilot (mikol haleilot)?

Sheb'chol haleilot anu och'lin chameitz umatzah (chameitz umatzah)

-halaylah hazeh (halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh) kulo matzah (kulo matzah).

Sheb'chol haleilot anu och'lin sh'ar y'rakot (sh'ar y'rakot),

-halaylah hazeh (halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh) maror (maror).

Sheb'chol haleilot ein anu matbilin afilu pa'am echat (afilu pa'am echat),

-halaylah hazeh (halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh) sh'tei f'amim (sh'tei f'amim).

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlim bein yoshvin uvein m'subin (bein yoshvin uvein m'subin),

-halaylah hazeh (halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh-- halaylah hazeh) kulanu m'subin (kulanu m'subin).

AVADIM HAYEENU - WE WERE SLAVES IN EGYPT!

1ST PERSON ACCOUNT

LEADER:

עֲבָדִים הָיינוּ לְפָרֶעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה. וְאֵלֹנוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הֲרִי
אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ מִשְׁעַבְדִּים הָיינוּ לְפָרֶעָה
בְּמִצְרַיִם. וְאֶפִּילוּ כִּלְנוּ חֲכָמִים כִּלְנוּ נְבוֹנִים כִּלְנוּ
זְקֵנִים כִּלְנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר
בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. וְכָל הַמְרָבָה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת
מִצְרַיִם הֲרִי זֶה מִשְׁבַּח.

*Avadim hayeenu l'pharoh b'mitzrayim. Vayotzi-einu Adonai
Eloheinu misham, b'yad chazakah uveezroa n'tuyah, v'ilu lo
hotzee hakadosh Baruch hu et avoteinu mimitzrayim, harei
anu uvaneinu uv'nei vaneinu, m'shubadeem hayeenu l'pharoh
b'mitzrayim. Va-afeelu kulanu chachameem, kulanu n'voneem,
kulanu z'keineem, kulanu yod'eem et hatorah, mitzvah aleinu
l'sapeir bitzi-at mitzrayim. V'chol hamarbeh l'sapeir bitzi-at
mitzrayim, harei zeh m'shubach.*

ALL:

“Because we were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Eternal, our God, brought us forth thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And if the Most Holy, blessed be He, had not brought forth our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and our children’s children would still be in bondage to the Pharaohs in Egypt. Therefore, even if we were all of us wise, all of us men of knowledge and understanding, all of us learned in the Law, it nevertheless would be incumbent upon us to speak of the departure from Egypt; and all those who speak of the departure from Egypt, are accounted praiseworthy.”

THE 4 SONS

בָּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא, בָּרוּךְ שְׁנַתָּן תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל, בָּרוּךְ הוּא.

כִּנְגֵד אַרְבַּעַה בְּנִים דִּבְרָה תּוֹרָה אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד
רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד תָּם, וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינוּ יוֹדְעֵ לְשִׂאוֹל

חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֵדוֹת וְהַחֲקִים
וְהַמְשֻׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צָוָה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם. וְאִם אַתָּה
אָמֹר לוֹ כִּהְלָכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אֵין מִפְטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח
אֶפִיקוֹמֵן

רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֵבוֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם
— וְלֹא לוֹ. וְלִפִּי שְׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכָּלֵל כִּפְר
בְּעֶקֶר וְאִם אַתָּה הִקְהֵה אֶת שְׁנֵיו וְאָמֹר לוֹ: בְּעֵבוֹר

זֶה עֲשֵׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. לִי וְלֹא-לוֹ. אֱלוֹ
הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל

תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מַה זֹאת? וְאִמְרָתְךָ אֵלָיו בְּחֻזֵּק
יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים

וְשִׂאֵינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשֵׂאוֹל – אֶת פְּתַח לוֹ, שְׁנֹאֵמֵר,
וְהַגְדַּת לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעֶבְרַת זֶה עֲשֵׂה ה'

לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם

*K'neged arba banim di'bra Torah: Echad Hacham, Echad
Rasha, Echad Tahm, V'echad Sheh'eino Yodeah Leeshol.*

TRANSLATION:

The Torah speaks of four types of children: one is wise, one is wicked, one is simple, and one does not know how to ask. (There are four passages in the Torah that command us to teach our sons about the Exodus. The four sons herein referenced each ask their question in a different way. Each son is therefore answered according to the way the question was asked but always referring him back to the Torah.)

READER:

The Wise One asks:

*“What is the meaning of the laws and traditions God
has commanded?” (Deuteronomy 6:20)*

You should teach him all the traditions of Passover,
even to the last detail.

The Wicked One asks:

“What does this ritual mean to you?”

(Exodus 12:26 HCSB)

By using the expression “*to you*” he excludes himself from his people and denies God. Shake his arrogance and say to him:

“This is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt...” *(Exodus 13:8 HCSB)*

“*For me*” and not for him -- for had he been in Egypt, he would not have been freed. (This is declaring a very serious implication. It presumes the wicked son does not really deserve to receive the benefits of the *seder* because he would not have been considered worthy to be freed from slavery in Egypt.)

The Simple One asks: “*What is all this?*” You should tell him:

“It was with a mighty hand that the Lord took us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” *(Exodus 13:14)*

As for the One Who Does Not Know How To Ask, you should open the discussion for him, as it is written:

“On that day explain to your son, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’”

(Exodus 13:8 HCSB).

THE FIFTH CHILD - THE ONE WHO CANNOT ASK:
Children of the Shoah (Holocaust) and those lost to abortion

LEADER:

Passover is a night of “fours.” We recite the four questions. We drink four cups. We spoke of four famous sons. Many modern *seders* include a section for a 5th child. Unlike the four sons we discussed, this child could be a son or a daughter. To this 5th child, it is unimportant whether they were wise, simple, indifferent, or not knowing enough about our traditions to ask an informed question.¹⁹

ALL:

We choose to remember the 5th child, the one who did not survive to ask. In memory of those Jewish boys and girls who died in the Holocaust, we stop to honor their memory and we point toward mankind’s only real hope—we wait for our Messiah.

LEADER:

We must also remember those Jewish children being slaughtered through the horror of abortion. “Estimates say 1/5 of all pregnancies in Israel end in abortion. Since 1948, more babies have been aborted in Israel than the number of children that died in the Holocaust” www.beadchaim.com. Hitler failed to finish their task of slaughtering Jewish infants. I am thankful that **Yad Vashem** helps us to remember “the 1,500,000 Jewish children who were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazis and their collaborators” www.yadvashem.org. But

we must no longer remain silent about the more than 2,000,000 infant murders that have happened in modern Israel. Let us pray that modern Jewish abortions will come to an end.

As of this printing, “despite the nation’s deeply rooted respect for life, Israel is one of the only countries in the world where it is legal to abort a baby up until birth.”²⁰ Like Pharaoh tried to force Shiphra and Puah to abort baby boys at the moment of birth, many now want to allow the same behavior in America. The divisive trend to promote late-term abortions is staggering.


**May we stand for the defenseless unborn and
may we pray for an end to the horrific holocaust
happening in the wombs of America and Israel.**

[If you are interested in supporting a wonderful pro-life ministry dedicated to serving Israeli women and babies of any ethnic, religious, or political background, please consider Be’ad Chaim at www.beadchaim.com.]

Let us honor the memory of aborted infants and also pray for the yet unborn. (If you are unashamed to make a bold, pro-life declaration, join with us and say . . .)

ALL:

We believe in the sanctity of life and we will speak up boldly for life.

- 
- ▶ *May we defend the defenseless unborn.*
 - ▶ *May we use our voices and influence on their behalf because they have neither.*
 - ▶ *May we find ways to assist pregnant women to have their babies, raise their babies, or find godly families to love and adopt these babies.*
 - ▶ *May we help and comfort those women who have suffered the loss of a child in miscarriage or death.*
 - ▶ *May we offer hope through God's love to women who went through an abortion and now grieve.*
 - ▶ *May God grant healing, peace, restoration, fruitfulness, and where needed, forgiveness.*
 - ▶ *May God bless the men, women, and families of those touched by these tragic events.*
 - ▶ *May special blessings be granted to those who value life, motherhood, and adoption.*
 - ▶ *And may God help us understand that being pro-life does not end at birth. The lives of mothers and children who struggle after the moment of delivery also matter.*

10 PLAGUES - DON'T LICK YOUR FINGER?

LEADER:

When people defy the will of God, they bring pain and suffering upon themselves. God's Law aims for the welfare and happiness of all humanity. To deny His Law and to do evil brings destruction upon those who perpetrate it.

ALL:

When Pharaoh defied the command of God to release the Hebrew people, he invited adversity upon himself and his own people.

LEADER:

Though the plagues that were visited upon the Egyptians were the result of their own evil, we do not rejoice over their downfall and defeat for we regard all life as sacred, even enemies who seek to destroy us.

ALL:

For our sake they met with suffering and death. We mourn their loss and express sorrow over their destruction even as we rejoice at our own deliverance.

LEADER:

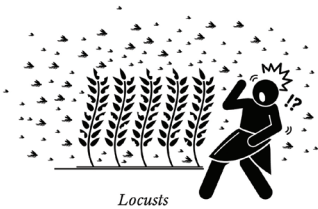
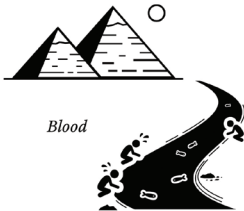
A full cup is the symbol of complete joy. Though we celebrate what God has done for us, our happiness is not complete so long as others have not found freedom from slavery. We shall therefore diminish the wine in our cups, as we recall the plagues visited upon the Egyptians. This

also gives expression to our sorrow that not all people have experienced God’s love and liberation.

We now recite the list of Ten Plagues, pouring off wine as each one is mentioned. Dip small finger into the wine while repeating each plague. Then wipe finger on napkin after each plague.

Remember what my Momma always told me,
“don’t lick your finger.”

10 Plagues of Egypt



- Blood - דָּם *Dam*
- Frogs - צְפַרְדֵּי Ts'fardayah
- Gnats (lice) - כִּנִּים *Kinnim*
- Flies (Scarab Beetles) - עָרוֹב *Arov*
- Pestilence (Sick Livestock) - דִּבְרַי *Dayvayr*
- Boils - שְׁחִין *Sh'chin*
- Hail - בָּרָד *Barad*
- Locusts - אַרְבֵּה *Arbay*
- Darkness - חֹשֶׁךְ *Chosech*
- Firstborn Slain - מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת *Makkat B'chorot*

BTW, some people have wondered why Pharaoh was so stubborn. They can't fathom why the first nine plagues weren't enough to convince him to release the Jews. Why did he wait until after the tenth plague to relent? Obviously, Pharaoh was in de Nile. ☺

DAYENU—IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

LEADER:

How many wonders did the Eternal perform for us?

Like God’s unending blessings, there are actually 15 verses to this seemingly unending song—but tummies growl and some children grow impatient.

DAYENU

דַּיְנוּ

HEBREW FOLK SONG
bethsnotes.com

Refrain

Dai, da - ye - nu — dai, da - ye - nu — dai, da - ye - nu, Da - ye - nu, Da - ye - nu, Da - ye - nu.

Fine

Dai, da - ye - nu — dai, da - ye - nu — dai, da - ye - nu, Da - ye - nu, Da - ye - nu

D.C. al fine

I - lu hot - zi - a - nu, hot - zi - a - nu mi - mitz - ra - yim, hot - si - a - nu mi - mitz - ra - yim^{im}, da - ye - nu.

2. Ilu natan natan lanu
Natan lanu et hatorah
Natan lanu et hatorah
Dayenu *Refrain*

3. Ilu natan natan lanu,
Natan lanu et hashabbat,
Natan lanu et hashabbat,
Dayenu *Refrain*

רָבֵן גַּמְלִיאֵל הָיָה אוֹמֵר: כֹּל שֶׁלֹּא אָמַר לְשֵׁה
דְּבָרִים אֵלּוּ בַּפֶּסַח, לֹא יֵצֵא יְדֵי חוּבָתוֹ, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן:
פֶּסַח, מַצָּה, וּמְרוֹר

LEADER:

Rabbi Gamaliel says,²¹ “Whoever has not done or recited these three things on Passover night has not fulfilled his Passover duty.” These are the three things that must be retold to all:

GAMALIEL'S גַּמְלִיאֵל BIG 3:

PESACH / MATZAH / BITTER HERBS

1. Pesach - Passover

The Paschal Lamb, which our ancestors ate during the existence of the Temple—for what reason was it eaten? Because the Omnipresent, blessed be He, passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, as it is said: “Ye shall say, it is a sacrifice of the Passover unto the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote Egyptians, and spared our houses, and the people bowed themselves and worshipped.”

2. Matzoh - Unleavened bread

READER:

This Unleavened Bread which we now eat, what does it mean? It is eaten because the dough of our ancestors had not time to become leavened, before the supreme King of kings, the Most Holy, blessed be He, revealed Himself unto them; and redeemed them, as it is said,

ALL:

“They baked unleavened cakes of dough which they had brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they made any provision for themselves.”

READER:

Judaism and Christianity symbolically relate *hametz*--leaven to sin. The Jewish Apostle Paul specifically called immorality “leaven.” He said that

“a little leaven leavens the whole lump.” (1st Cor. 5:6)

Paul was concerned that sin would proliferate in the lives of new Christians. He warned believers to

“Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us.” (1st Cor. 5:7)

≡ **3. Maror - Bitter herbs**

LEADER:

This bitter herb which we eat, what does it mean?

ALL:

It is eaten because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our forefathers in Egypt, as it is written:

“And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigour.” (Exodus 1:14 JPS)



DECALOGUE—TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Law is not often preached anymore. Perhaps that is why we live in a lawless time. My pastor (former pro-baseball player Kerry McDaniel) used to ask kids if they could recite the 10 commandments? If they were able, he gave them a dollar bill. It's good to encourage children to learn God's Law. We received this Law during our Exodus from *Mitzrayim*—Egypt. I believe it's appropriate to remember this foundational truth at Passover. So as to not forget, let's recite them together.



ALL:

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Exodus 20:2)

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image - thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

הַלְלוּיָהּ HALLELUYAH PSALM 113

הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי ה', הַלְלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם ה'. יְהִי
שֵׁם ה' מְבֹרָךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. מִמְזֶרַח שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד
מְבֹאוֹ מְהֵלֵל שֵׁם ה'. רַם עַל-כָּל-גּוֹיִם ה', עַל
הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ. מִי כִּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַמְגַבִּיחַ לְשַׁבֵּת,
הַמְשַׁפִּילֵי לְרֹאוֹת בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ? מִקִּימֵי מַעְפָּר
דָּל, מֵאֲשָׁפֹת יָרִים אֲבִיוֹן, לְהוֹשִׁיבֵי עַם-נְדִיבִים,
עַם נְדִיבֵי עַמּוֹ. מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֵקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת, אִם הַבָּנִים
שֹׂמְחֵה. הַלְלוּיָהּ.

Halleluyah! Praise, servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. May the Name of the Lord be blessed from now and forever. From the rising of the sun in the East to its setting, the name of the Lord is praised. Above all nations is the Lord, His honor is above the heavens. Who is like the Lord, our God, Who sits on high; Who looks down upon the heavens and the earth? He brings up the poor out of the dirt; from the refuse piles, He raises the destitute. To seat him with the nobles, with the nobles of his people. He seats a barren woman in a home, a happy mother of children. Halleluyah!



DRINK SECOND CUP—DELIVERANCE (*Cup of telling-forth*)

LEADER:

“This is the word of God as embodied in our *Torah*. Let us drink the second cup.”

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, boray p'ri ha-gafen.

ALL:

“Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.”



RACHTZAH רַחֲצָה רַחֲצָה רַחֲצָה ALL WASH HANDS AND SAY BLESSING.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם

*Baruch atta Adonai Eloheynu melech haolam asher kidshanu
b'mitzvotav v'tzee'vanu al ne'telat yadaim.*

ALL:

“Blessed art Thou O Eternal, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Thy commandments and commanded us to wash the hands.”²²

HAMOTZI מוֹצִיא מַצָּה MOTZI MATZAH

We will now remember the command of the Lord to the Children of Israel to eat unleavened bread.

Hold each of the three pieces of *matzah* and recite the blessing.

Let's "BREAK BREAD" - literally. We break and distribute pieces from the top & middle matzah. Share broken pieces after reciting two blessings together.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לָחֶם
מִן הָאָרֶץ

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, ha-motzi
lechem min ha-aretz.*

ALL:

Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who bringest forth bread from the earth.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, asher
kid'shanu, b'mitzvotav, v'tzivahnu, al achilat matzah.*

ALL:

Blessed art Thou, Lord, our God, King of the universe,
Who has hallowed us with Thy commandments, and has
commanded us concerning the eating of matzos. Amen.

BITTER HERBS & CHAROSES

(Please remember this food contains nuts.)

LEADER:

We eat bitter herbs to remind us of our people's afflictions.
The Exodus account informs us that the Egyptians,

*“Made their lives bitter with hard bondage--in mortar,
in brick, and in all manner of service in the field.
All their service in which they made them serve
was with rigor.” (Ex. 1:14)*

EXPLAIN:

The bitter herbs should be chewed and tasted. This helps us avoid abstractly talking “about” bitter oppression. Together, we will “share” a bitter experience. Although minuscule in comparison, and merely symbolic, let us remember. As we will taste the bitter herbs, let us feel something to remember.

However, we do not want the experience to end without hope. So, after reciting the blessing, we will mix the *maror* with our sweet *charoses*. We will eat the bitter with the sweet, to not be left with only darkness and despair. I hope we will be reminded of the sweetness of knowing

God. But we will also consider those who still suffer in our darkened world.²³

Now we dip some horseradish into the *charoses* and say a special blessing.



מָרוֹר MAROR BITTER HERBS

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, asher
kid'shanu, b'mitzvotav, v'tzivahnu, al achilat maror. Amen.*

ALL:

“Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who has hallowed us with Thy commandments, and
has commanded us concerning the eating of the bitter
herbs.”

READER:

Our sweet *charoses* did not eradicate the taste of bitter herbs. But I hope it gave sweetness to add hope for the future. If we walk with the Spirit of grace in our life, we can reflect the love of God and express His mercy. If we

know God’s mercy, we should work to temper human suffering and provide hope. Every child of God can find reason for hope. Each of us can add kindness. We can all prayerfully stand with those who suffer—even when it gets a little messy, like dipping *maror* into *charoses*.



KOREICH כֹּרֵיךְ HILLEL SANDWICH

BITTER HERBS & MATZAH

Now we eat our bitter herbs as a sandwich with festival matzah.

LEADER:

Tradition adds one more custom, in honor of the great teacher, Hillel, head of the rabbinic academy in Jerusalem in the time of the Romans. A heathen asked the rabbi to teach him the entire *Torah* while he stood on one foot. Hillel said, “*Do not unto others what you would hate them to do unto to you. That is the whole Torah,*” he told the man, “*the rest is commentary. Now go and study.*”



On Passover, Hillel precisely followed the instruction about the sanctified lamb. “*Upon unleavened bread and bitter herbs shall they eat it.*” So, he combined *matzah* and bitter herbs and ate them together. In remembrance of the Temple and Hillel, we shall place the bitter herbs on the *matzah* in place of the Paschal lamb.



SHULKHAN ORAYCH שֻׁלְחָן עֹרֵךְ DINNER

This is the time in our Passover celebration when we join in eating the Passover meal. If you were at my house, we'd be gearing up for a steaming vat of Momma Weiss' *Matzah* ball soup. But for now, as a minimum, we will eat a traditional *seder* substitute the *chagigah*. The egg represents one of the typical festival sacrifices eaten during the celebration.

Dip the baytza (egg) in the saltwater.

ALL:

The saltwater reminds us of the tears shed by our forefathers while living as slaves in Egypt. Taskmasters embittered our lives, but God has brought us to this place of freedom to remember His love. The egg that we now dip is symbolic of the sacrificial lamb that ancient Jews ate during the Passover meal.²⁴

LEADER:

As *we* consider the Passover lamb, we think of Jesus our Redeemer. For us, He is

“The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

(Rev. 13:8)

Our Messiah lives and He is the reason for our hope.

We will give thanks for our food, but not until **after** we have eaten dinner. This will surprise some Christians, but as Jews we find that . . . “Among the many blessings that we recite in the fulfillment of our religious duties, the only ones that Scripture explicitly required us to say are those that we say *after* we eat.”²⁵ And the Talmud tells us that a blessing for food was first spoken by Moses when God gave us our Bread from heaven and Moses gave thanks for God’s manna.



TZAFUN צפון FIND THE AFIKOMEN

The leader must find the hidden, missing half of the broken middle *matzah* or redeem it through a negotiation with the child who hid it. The piece is needed for the *seder* to continue. (Actually, another piece of *matzah* could be used but reverse blackmail would spoil the fun.)

EVERYONE WILL SOON USE THEIR PIECE OF THE
AFIKOMEN. (Glasses should be refilled too.)

BIRKAT HA'MAZON--GRACE AFTER MEAL

Why do we say grace after our meal?

Think of it like this: When people are full—without need, they are less dependent on God. When we are hungry, we want food. When the food is still in front of our eyes, we will humbly pray for food. When we are full and no longer hungry, we forget to be thankful. There is great danger in our comfort. That is when we can feel self-sufficient. Moses instructed: ***“When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.”***

Moses gave a prudent warning to all of us:

“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God . . . then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’”

(Deuteronomy 8:10, 11-14, 17)

Maybe that is why Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God (Matt. 19:24). Wealth brings the danger of pride. Perhaps success brings greater temptation than most of us realize. Saying grace after our meal is intended to protect us against this subtle form arrogance and pride.

Now, let us gather our thoughts and reflect upon the goodness of God and give thanks for His life-giving provision. As He provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness, God still provides for His children. We are blessed with many reasons to offer God thanksgiving.

BTW, I heard a fascinating story about Moses and the children of Israel walking across the dry bottom of the Red Sea. The children of Israel began complaining that they were thirsty. It was a pretty long, dry hike. Sadly, they were not able to drink from the walls of water on either side of them, because it was salt-water.

A fish inside the water wall yelled to Moses and told him that that he and his school of fish friends could fix their problem. They offered to pull the saltwater through their gills and remove the salt. Then they could force the fresh water from their mouths like a drinking fountain. The Israelites could be refreshed.

Moses accepted this gracious proposal. But before the fish began the process, they had one demand. They insisted their descendants should always receive an invitation to future *seder* meals so they could join in commemorating the Exodus. Since the fish were going to play an important role in the story, and

since the thirsty children of Israel were always complaining about something, Moses agreed to their request. And to this day, the name Moses gave them has stuck. They are still known as “Go Filter Fish!” ☺



BARAYCH בָּרַךְ BLESS

FILL THE 3RD CUP BUT DO NOT DRINK - SAY GRACE

LEADER: Rabosay n'vawrach. רַבּוֹתַי נְבָרַךְ.

(Gentlemen let us say Grace.)

יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבָרַךְ יְמֵתָהּ וְעַד עוֹלָם

Y' hee shaym adonai m'vorawch may-a taw v'ad o-lam.

ALL:

The name of the Eternal be blessed from now unto eternity.

בְּרִשׁוֹת מְרֹנֵנוּ וְרַבָּנוּ וְרַבּוֹתַי, נְבָרַךְ שְׂאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְּׁלוֹ

Birshus maw-raw-nawn v'ra-bosai n'vaw-raych she-aw chal-nu mee-she-lo.

ALL:

Let us bless Him our God, of whose gifts we have partaken.

בָּרוּךְ [אֱלֹהֵינוּ] שְׂאָכְלָנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ וּבְטוּבוֹ חַיֵּינוּ

Baruch she-aw-chalnu mee-she-lo uv'tuvo chawyeenu. Baruch hoo oo-varaych she-mo.

ALL:

Blessed be He our God, of whose gifts we have partaken,
and by whose goodness we exist.

DRINK THE THIRD CUP
CUP OF BLESSING / REDEMPTION

LEADER:

Many Christian scholars believe this was the last cup of wine Jesus drank at His final Passover. I agree. Redemption is the theme. Let us drink this cup of blessing for our redemption.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, boray p'ri ha-gafen.

ALL:

“Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the universe,
creator of the fruit of the vine.”



HALLEL הַלֵּל PSALM 115

We pour the fourth cup and complete the Hallel

לֹא לָנוּ, ה', לֹא לָנוּ, כִּי לְשִׁמְךָ תָּנוּ כְּבוֹד, עַל חֲסִדֶיךָ
 עַל אֲמֹתֶיךָ. לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֵיךְ נָא אֱלֹהֵיהֶם.
 וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בַּשָּׁמַיִם, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר חָפֵץ עָשָׂה. עֲצַבְיֵיהֶם
 כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם. פֶּה לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ,
 עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יֵרְאוּ. אֲזִנָּיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ, אֶף
 לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְיחוּן. יְדֵיהֶם וְלֹא יְמִישׁוּן, רַגְלֵיהֶם וְלֹא
 יִהְלְכוּ, לֹא יִהְגּוּ בְּגִרּוֹנָם. כְּמוֹתֵם יִהְיוּ עֲשִׂיהֶם, כֹּל
 אֲשֶׁר בְּטַח בָּהֶם. יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בֵּי, עֲזָרָם וּמַגְנָם
 הוּא. בֵּית אֱהָרֹן בְּטַחוּ בֵּי, עֲזָרָם וּמַגְנָם הוּא. יֵרְאִי
 ה' בְּטַחוּ בֵּי, עֲזָרָם וּמַגְנָם הוּא. יֵי זְכָרְנוּ יְבָרֶךְ.
 יְבָרֶךְ אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְבָרֶךְ אֶת בֵּית אֱהָרֹן, יְבָרֶךְ
 יֵרְאִי ה', הַקְּטָנִים עִם הַגְּדֹלִים. יִסֶּף ה' עֲלֵיכֶם,
 עֲלֵיכֶם וְעַל בְּנֵיכֶם. בְּרוּכִים אַתֶּם לֵי, עֲשֵׂה שְׁמִים
 וְאַרְץ. הַשָּׁמַיִם שְׁמִים לֵי וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לְבְנֵי אָדָם.
 לֹא הִמְתִּים יְהַלְלוּ יְהוָה וְלֹא כָּל יִרְדֵי דוֹמָה. וְאַנְחָנוּ
 נְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. הַלְלוּיָהּ

Not to us, not to us, but rather to Your name, give glory for your kindness and for your truth. Why should the nations say, “Say, where is their God?” But our God is in the heavens, all that He wanted, He has done. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have a mouth but do not speak; they have eyes but do not see. They have ears but do not hear; they have a nose but do not smell. Hands, but they do not feel; feet, but do not walk; they do not make a peep from their throat. Like them will be their makers, all those that trust in them. Israel, trust in the Lord; their help and shield is He. House of Aharon, trust in the Lord; their help and shield is He. Those that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; their help and shield is He. The Lord who remembers us, will bless; He will bless the House of Israel; He will bless the House of Aharon. He will bless those that fear the Lord, the small ones with the great ones. May the Lord bring increase to you, to you and to your children. Blessed are you to the Lord, the maker of the heavens and the earth. The heavens, are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth He has given to the children of man. It is not the dead that will praise the Lord, and not those that go down to silence. But we will bless the Lord from now and forever. Halleluyah! (Psalms 115)



Thank the Lord, since He is good, since His kindness is forever. Thank the Power of powers since His kindness is forever. To the Master of masters, since His kindness is forever. To the One who alone does wondrously great deeds, since His kindness is forever. To the one who made the Heavens with discernment, since His kindness is forever. To the One who spread the earth over the waters, since His kindness is forever. To the One who made great lights, since His kindness is forever. The sun to rule in the day, since His kindness is forever. The moon and the stars to rule in the night, since His kindness is forever. To the One that smote Egypt through their firstborn, since His kindness is forever. And He took Israel out from among them, since His kindness is forever. With a strong hand and an outstretched forearm, since His kindness is forever. To the One who cut up the Reed Sea into strips, since His kindness is forever. And He made Israel to pass through it, since His kindness is forever. And He jolted Pharaoh and his troop in the Reed Sea, since His kindness is forever. To the One who led his people in the wilderness, since His kindness is forever. To the One who smote great kings, since His kindness is forever. And he killed mighty kings, since His kindness is forever. Sichon, king of the Amorite, since His kindness is forever. And Og, king of the Bashan, since His kindness is forever. And he gave their land as an inheritance, since His kindness is forever. An inheritance for Israel, His servant, since His kindness is forever. That in our lowliness, He remembered us, since His kindness is forever. And he delivered us from our adversaries, since His kindness is forever. He gives bread to all flesh, since His kindness is forever. Thank the Power of the heavens, since His kindness is forever.

(Psalms 136)

UNSUNG HEROES OF PASSOVER!

Like several aspects of this *seder*, my family chooses to go beyond the norm and give honor where honor is due. Did you know that the *haggadah* used in most Jewish homes ignores half the population of the slaves who left Egypt? It's true. In addition to not discussing Moses, most Passover *seders* are silent about the women of the Exodus account. I believe that tradition should change. Join me in giving a long overdue shout-out to the ladies who helped us secure our freedom from Egypt.

BTW, Do you know why it took 40 years for Moses to lead the children of Israel to the Promised Land? Men don't ask for directions. 😊

ALL:

Let us remember and give thanks to God for five special women who are heroines of Passover. Without them, the story of our deliverance could not have been written and we would have remained in bondage. And as we do, let us also pray for, and honor, all the women at our table. May each of them love God, be wise, be bold, be honorable, and be fruitful.

FEMALE READER:

May we love children like Jochebed. The blessed mother of Moses spared the life of her son while risking her own. And may we have faith to release our loved ones into God's care to bring His desires to pass in their lives.

May we love our families as Miriam. The sister of Moses loved her brothers, her parents, her people, and her God.

May we love life like the Hebrew midwives, Shiprah and Puah. These godly women refused to slaughter innocent baby boys. They disobeyed Pharaoh at their own peril. And they were rewarded by God for their choice to preserve life while others destroyed life at the very moment of birth.

May we be sensitive to the leading of God and open our hearts to His will. The daughter of Pharaoh spared the life of Moses. She adopted this special, chosen child of God into her own family.²⁶ May God bless those who adopt, and those who have been adopted.²⁷



ELIJAH'S CUP HAS BOTH GLORIOUS AND TRAGIC IMPLICATIONS.

Pass Elijah's cup and allow each to pour into it
(before opening door).

Though we will yet drink the traditional 4th cup of wine to freedom, we must pause here for what has come to be known as the 5th cup. No, it is not time for Maxwell House coffee. But it has much more glorious implications.

We have shared three cups together. A fourth is yet to come. But it is time to interject a thought about a different cup. “The Talmudists could not decide whether four or five cups of wine were necessary for the *seder*, so a fifth cup is poured and left for Elijah.”²⁸ Let us read a portion of a modern prayer together.

ALL:

“In silence, let us pass the cup of Elijah, the cup of the final redemption yet-to-be. We remember our people’s return to the land of Israel, the beginning of that redemption. Let us each fill Elijah’s Cup with some of our wine. In so doing, let us remember that our redemption is closer than ever before.



**AFTER ELIJAH’S CUP HAS BEEN POURED,
OPEN DOOR FOR ELIJAH:**

READER:

“We are told that Elijah the prophet visits every house where a *seder* is being held. Let us open the door for Elijah, and also as a symbol of hospitality and friendliness, as a sign that none is shut off from his fellow man.”

All:

“May the Compassionate One send us Elijah the Prophet of blessed memory, to bring us good tidings of sympathy and salvation.”

READER:

The Prophet Malachi foretold this about Elijah, when he said,

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD, And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.”

(Malachi 4:23-24 JPS)

ALL:

“For I firmly believe in the coming of the Messiah, and even though the Messiah may tarry, in spite of this, I still believe.”

OUR SONG FOR ELIJAH.

אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתְּשֻׁבִי, אֱלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי
בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ יָבוֹא אֵלֵינוּ עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד

Eliyahu ha-navi, Eliyahu ha-tishbi, Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu ha-giladi.

Bim-hei-rah be'yamenu, yavo eileinu, im mashiach ben David, im mashiach ben David.

**WE WILL NOW CLOSE THE DOOR,
BUT IT IS TIME TO OPEN OUR MINDS**

Is the Jewish messianic hope the only reason a door is opened for Elijah? No! One important reason the practice became commonplace provides a sad commentary on Christian anti-Semitism. During the Middle Ages, Passover became a season of fear for Jews. The Church held enormous control throughout Europe. Monstrous church leaders promoted awful, hate-filled theology that caused the spread of a horrible accusation known as the Blood Libel. Ignorant, superstitious Christians of the 13th century, leveled wild charges against Jews that led to more terrible suffering during the Passover season. Churchmen spread the Blood Libel story. The lies declared that Jews required the blood of Christian children to make *matzah* for Passover. Rumors abounded about evil Jews killing innocent Gentile children. Those who hated Jews used these false accusations to plan violent attacks against innocent Jewish people during Passover. This anti-Semitic terror went on for centuries. Believe it or not, the same treacherous rumors continue to this day²⁹ among the enemies of God's people.³⁰

To summarize, consider 4 simple facts:



1. *In the 1st century, the world's Jewish population was 4.5 million.*
2. *By the year 1500, the Jewish population had been crushed down to 1.5 million.*
3. *In the early part of the mid-20th century, the Jewish population had swelled to 16 million.*
4. *Then Hitler systematically destroyed 6 million Jews.*

**PASS A PIECE OF AFIKOMEN TO EVERYONE
FOR UPCOMING COMMUNION**
(The final cup of wine should be refilled.)

FOURTH CUP TO FREEDOM / CUP OF COMPLETION
(OUR COMMUNION)

LEADER:

Everyone should have received a portion of the *Afikomen*. We will soon eat it and savor the flavor of freedom. But unlike many Jewish *seders*, as we conclude our evening, we will remember the last Passover *seder* celebrated by *Yeshua HaMaschiach*—Jesus the Messiah.

**Please take a moment to reflect on your own
spiritual condition.**

This is an open communion. All believers are welcome to participate. But it is unwise to partake unless you have made peace with the Lord. It is because “*Christ our Passover*” was sacrificed that we have hope and forgiveness (1st Cor. 5:7). If you believe that, this *Afikomen* will be our bread of the sacrament. And as we drink the traditional 4th cup of wine, this special form of communion will deepen our spiritual union with our Jewish Messiah.

But first we will pronounce the traditional Hebrew blessing together.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, boray p'ri ha-gafen.

ALL:

“Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

LEADER:

Jesus instituted this sacrament of the Church at Passover. It has endured for 2,000 years. Please hold the communion elements and recite the words from Matthew’s gospel together.

ALL:

“Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26a-28)



NIRTZAH נִרְצָה

CONCLUDING THE SEDER: MORE QUESTIONS?

Before we depart, can we commit to love one another? Can this night have brought with it a crack in our shell? The question is asked every year at each *seder*, “Why is this night different from all others?” Can we answer that question with an affirmation? Can we declare, “From this night forward my life will be different.” Tonight, and then again tomorrow, and, in everyday to come, can we say, “I will serve God and love His children?”

If we cannot, then this night is not different from all other nights. If we cannot, then this night is one more night of powerless, empty religion. We are called by God to be His witnesses. To announce the kingdom, He ushers into this world.

Every year I like to add my own **FOUR QUESTIONS**. You see, I believe we can live better, we can love better, and, if we are

more reflective, we can better reflect God's love. So, I ask myself:
Who will I keep out?
Who will I ignore?
Who will I mistreat?
To whom will I present a false gospel that suggests, "Jesus loves you, but I don't really have the time?"

**May we all have time for God and His purposes.
Remember, history is His Story.**

And it is in such a historical context that we will close our *seder*. We will recite an ancient Jewish prayer generally attributed to Rabbi Akiva who died during the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome in approximately 135CE. It was then that Jerusalem was completely annihilated, and the Jews exiled from our holy city. Rabbi Akiva prayed in faith that Jerusalem would someday be free from foreign rule. And with messianic hope at Passover, he prayed that we would live to celebrate our next Passover in Jerusalem.³¹ With only 3 words, it may be the shortest prayer ever added to a liturgy.

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
And to that, may we declare with Jews around the world . . .**

ALL:

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם

L'shanah ha'ba-ah bee-ru-shalayim

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!³²



SECTION FOUR

**EPILOGUE: FREEDOM MARCHES, BRAND
AWARENESS, & BEING BRANDED**



EPILOGUE: FREEDOM MARCHES, BRAND AWARENESS, & BEING BRANDED

When I write books, it usually takes many years. It is not because I am slow. I just have many questions about important matters. And it seems to take years before I am confident about my conclusions on critical issues. Some questions require critical insights and a search for new information. I wrote large portions of my liturgy for our family long ago. Some segments were prepared for large public Passover celebrations. Other parts were written ahead of recent Passover seasons. The final portions were completed after modern plagues forced new reflection. And some of my thoughts will never be read unless you access my personal journals, long after this work has been printed. You see, I write because I am still trying to learn. I assume that is also why you read works like this one.

Allow me to point you back to the list of the World's Greatest Excuses. You may not have strong feelings about Sharknado.¹ Aaron's award-winning excuse about the Golden Calf may have sounded humorous. Yet there is nothing funny about breaking God's law. A winning excuse may pacify your teacher if the dog really ate your homework. Breaking God's law yields tragic consequences. God does not accept excuses or wink at sin.

¹ If you missed it, see page 38-39.

**God has only two responses to sin.
He judges sin or He forgives sin.
It's the law.**

God gave His Law to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. It was a big deal. Jewish people still celebrate that occasion. The biblical festival of *Shavuot* recalls that event annually. *Shavuot* is also known as the Feast of Weeks. It is directly connected to Passover. Seven weeks, 49 days, are precisely counted between Passover and *Shavuot*. The 50th day marks the celebration of God giving us the Law through Moses. It is a very big deal! In fact, our Feast of Weeks is one of the “big three.” The Bible requires adherents to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times during the year. They are called the *Shalosh Regalim*—the three biblical pilgrimage festivals. These include the festivals of Passover (*Pesach*), Weeks (*Shavuot*), and Tabernacles (*Succoth*).

You may wonder why a note about the Feast of Weeks is included in this epilogue about Passover? You may also wonder why Christians should care about this rather obscure celebration? God's Passover connection to *Shavuot* was a well-orchestrated plan. It has tremendous meaning. God gave His law to us shortly after He set us free from Egypt. We broke the law before Moses had a chance to catch his breath from his hike down Mt. Sinai. And we have been breaking God's laws ever since.

The law proves that we are sinners.

It is the documentation that irrefutably establishes our guilt.² When our behavior is measured against God's rules, all of our excuses evaporate. Against the backdrop of the laws we have broken, we stand before a Holy God as unholy people. God requires holiness—not simply better excuses. On our first day of having the Law, we were judged for what we were—sinful idolaters. We broke God's law.

This is why Jews are encouraged to celebrate Shavuot by studying God's Word. But we all realize that knowing the law is not equivalent to obeying the law, just as reading a speed limit sign does not equal driving at the posted limit.

It's possible, but not likely. To many people, God's laws and traffic laws are merely suggestions until one is caught. Some folks evade police radar or speed traps. Nobody evades God. On the day of Judgment, God's law will prove our guilt. Our best efforts to keep some laws will not alleviate the guilt for those laws we have broken. As has been often repeated by others, "God doesn't judge on the curve." The day of judgment will be a pass/fail test. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. In other words, all sin must be purged. A little will not be tolerated, even if it seems hidden in the cereal cabinet with a ribbon creating an illusion of inaccessibility.

² ***"Now do you see it? No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners"*** (Romans 3:20 TLB).

True atonement through a sin-offering is the only resolution to our sin-problem.

Did you know that *Shavuot*--our Jewish Feast of Weeks has another, more common Christian name? Since it occurs on the 50th day marked from Passover, it became known to Christians by its Greek name—Pentecost. I want my readers to recognize a penetrating truth. We must remember that 3,000 Jews died the day we were given the law.³ They suffered a most violent death as a horrific judgment. They had broken the law. God made His view on such matters painfully clear. But I also want everyone to recognize that it was no coincidence that God chose *Shavuot* to introduce His Holy Spirit to the Church. It was not merely an accounting entry that 3,000 Jews were saved (and filled with the Holy Spirit) on Pentecost, the same day of remembrance when 3,000 Jews died for breaking God's law.

**God made right what man made wrong.
Power came to the Church on the day marked
by having received God's laws when we gained
the gift of God's Spirit to accompany His Word
in our lives. Both are needed for a truly fruitful
spiritual life.**

Both are freely available.

3 Exodus 32:28

This epilogue points us back to 50 days before we received the law. I am encouraging people to understand God's Passover. This celebration marked God's children inside and out. When God brands us, it becomes a reminder of His ownership. It is also a quiet, external identification that others may notice. When folks learn of your choice to participate in an ancient Jewish ritual, they might wonder, "Why did you do that?" If they ask, you can tell them about the Freedom March.

Martin Luther King Jr. did not invent freedom marches. I would propose that it was an innovation of God. It was the Lord who put Moses at the head of the parade. God wanted His children to remember His majestic power and His great grace. Hence, God provided clear demands about memorializing the Exodus in the hearts and minds of every generation of Jewish people. From the time we were miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt until now, we remember that long march. We did not take a plane, a train, or a Greyhound Bus out of Egypt. We marched out of town in a long line of 600,000 men, plus perhaps triple that count with women and children. The march included massive herds of livestock and wagons of the material goods, supplies, and precious items gifted to them on their way out of town.⁴ This march from bondage to freedom was unlike anything that had ever been seen in human history. And it was certainly worth remembering because every aspect of this freedom march carries a divine imprint.

4 The wealth of the average, individual Egyptian family was plundered by the Hebrews. But this was not through coercion or at the point of a spear. No. The Egyptians voluntarily gave their stuff away as a bon voyage departure present. God unilaterally decided to give the former slaves 400 years of unpaid, well-earned back pay! The Hebrews had been forced to perform centuries of free labor under the whip of Egyptian taskmasters. God miraculously touched the Egyptian people to pay what was owed in kind at the moment of their departure.

God insisted that every firstborn male person and animal was to be dedicated to Him. There were no exceptions. This was in light of the recent horror visited on the Egyptians as a result of the tenth plague that swept Egypt over the brink of unthinkable disaster. The firstborn male animals and the firstborn male people in Egypt were systematically killed in the hours before the Exodus. Only those homes and families covered by the blood of the Passover lamb on their doors were spared.

That blood was the identifier that branded that first generation of God's children who were spared from that bitter destruction.

During that first freedom march, instructions were given to everyone God had delivered from slavery. He made a specific demand on the entire nation of Israel that was non-negotiable. Every firstborn male was to belong to God. He said,

"They are mine!" (Exodus 13:1b TLB)

There was never to be any question of ownership. That may seem odd. Why would God make such an extreme, bizarre demand? I believe it was all to be a reminder of the events surrounding the Exodus from Egypt. God unilaterally claimed rightful ownership. He spared them.

**He branded them with the blood.
Therefore, they were His.**

In a manner analogous to every true follower of God's Messiah, the firstborn males were bought with a price. The blood of the lamb was the only accepted currency of exchange in God's economy. Once purchased, God marked them as His own. There is a sense in which the modern term, "brand awareness" applies to God and the branding of His people.

"Brand awareness: the extent to which consumers are familiar with the distinctive qualities or image of a particular brand of goods or services."⁵

I believe this sums up two of the most important reasons God has specific expectations for His people.

- 1) **He wants us to act in such a way that we bring honor to His name [to protect His brand].**
- 2) **He want us to be recognized as His family when we conduct ourselves in such a way that makes His love and His purposes known in the marketplace of ideas [to spread His brand].**

I also believe a tertiary benefit exists for such branding. It is important to God that when a lost, renegade, or previously unbranded person is in crisis, they should be able to identify a properly branded person as one of God's agents. Thereby, a broken person will recognize agents of God in their times of desperation and decision. This is crucial so the unbranded can be invited into the unique relationship with God where wholeness and holiness can be secured. God invites such broken souls into

5 [Best MKT 2020 Chapter 11 Flashcards | Quizlet](#)

relationship with Him and His family to transcend the form of retail religion and grant new life in faith.

When I was a boy, approaching the age to celebrate becoming a *Bar Mitzvah* (Son of Commandment), I was taught to “lay *tefillin*.” Laying (donning or putting on) phylacteries was part of this rite of passage. Judaism has defined what such implementation looks like for the modern world. And Judaism has created a fascinating mystique around phylacteries.⁶ In fact, the Scriptures do not say much about the details. So observant Jews depend on the various rabbinic interpretations describing the use of phylacteries. The oral traditions contained in the Talmud have become the modern framework for donning *tefillin*. But do they accurately represent the biblical mandate? I think more was intended.

Observant Jews are often known by their outward appearance. Different groups of Ultra-Orthodox Jews are identified by the style of their clothing or fur hats. Their branding includes fringed garments, side curls, long beards, and the prayerful, regular donning of *tefillin*. But I must ask if wrapping our arms in leather straps and a little black box, while wearing a similar forehead version of the contraption, or wearing 18th century men’s fashion styles was the version of brand God envisioned? Was that God’s marketing strategy? I think more was expected.

The children of God were intended to be recognized by our response to the great things God has done for us in this world. We were given commands of behavior to pursue. And we were instructed to remember the miracles God bestowed on us during our freedom march. The supernatural deliverance from Pharaoh’s world were to become part of our corporate DNA.

6 Exodus 13:9; Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; and Deuteronomy 11:18.

And the centuries of Egyptian bondage were never to pass from our corporate memory. We celebrate God's required annual recounting of our Exodus. It brands us as His own special people. It is as though He places His special mark on each celebrant who faithfully remembers the great things God has done. Scripture explains,

“This annual memorial week will brand you as his own unique people, just as though he had branded his mark of ownership upon your hands or your forehead.”

(Exodus 13:9 TLB)

The throne of our thoughts and decisions is in our head. With our heads, we make choices that lead to behavior which reveals our character for all to see. Our mouth speaks words that express what fills our thoughts. In old fashioned King James English, that truth is written as,

“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

(Matthew 12:34)

People know our deepest beliefs when our actions mirror the words that overflows from our heart.

Like an antenna atop a car or a house receives a broadcast signal, the head holds the primary receive device for information that God is transmitting.

We see, hear, speak, and even breathe above the neck. That is why we should never allow our lives to be directed from below the belt.

Perhaps that is also why Jewish male infants are given a sign of the covenant through circumcision. It presumes both a shedding of blood and an indelible mark of God's brand.

The phylacteries can offer a branding symbolism that also marks our heads and hands with God's ownership. But it might be more effective to literally put our heads and hands into His service as God directs for His glory and for our good. We should choose our brand wisely and wear it openly. We are called to relationship with God. Retail religion will not satisfy broken hearts and lives that require healing and divine direction through a living relationship with God.

In my introduction to this book, I stated,

“The Church must stop ignoring the Jewish Bible or they will misunderstand the Last Supper. Most unfortunately, they may also misunderstand the last days in which we live.”

I cannot conclude this work without confronting the possibility that we are living at the end of this age. Politics feel out of control. Technology speeds beyond man's ability to manage with integrity. Economic chaos has created impassable chasms between the super-rich and the mostly-poor. A physical plague brought judgment that temporarily stopped the world. A spiritual judgment is surely coming that will make the pandemic

look like a hiccup. Those who voluntarily receive the Lordship of God's Messiah already have the vaccine. Those who do not will be devastated by the punishment meted out against the symptomatic evils of our near-pagan society.

What brand have you chosen for yourself? Has God's brand of ownership marked you? Will you wear it with abandon and let all see that you live for God? Or are you ashamed of His mark in our post-Christian world? If so, I must warn you that another mark awaits. In closing, I will ask an awkward question. Few seem willing to confront this matter. Could it be that another brand of spiritual ownership will soon become noticeable throughout our land? Will a different mark be branded on the heads or hands of those who serve God's enemy? According to Revelation 13:16, a time will come when the servants of this world will join the enemies of God. They will be required to receive another mark at the end of this age.

The Beast from out of the Earth will eventually create his own brand awareness for those sporting a new deceptive form of ownership. His consumers will be focused on material goods. Conforming to the Beast's branding will be the only way his agents will be permitted to acquire the goods and services they desire. Of course, there are countless views on what the "mark of the beast" will be. I am not proposing end time theories, though I believe we truly live in the end times. I am simply saying God wants to be made known to His children and by His children. He wants His family's values and cherished memories to be known, preserved, and liberally shared. God wants His family to wear His brand so they will never want the brand of any enemy. His family should leave room in their hearts for the meaning and purpose of His Passover.

God declared His ownership over the surviving first born sons of Israel. I am one. I am a first-born son of Israel. I belong to God. But neither birth order nor lineage are particularly important in the big picture. Being born-again and branded as such are much more crucial matters. So, I am delighted to remind us all of what God repeated,

“Again I say, this celebration shall identify you as God’s people, just as much as if his brand of ownership were placed upon your foreheads. It is a reminder that the Lord brought us out of Egypt with great power.”

(Exodus 13:16 TLB)

Whether you realize it or not, we all wear a brand. Onlookers figure out our true allegiance very quickly. Our children, family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and social media connections see our brand, even if we don’t realize it hangs out. You can try to hide it, but some things just cannot be tucked in. Our brand will someday become totally clear. A day will come when God will call those who wear His brand to Himself. Everyone else will wear another’s brand and they will miss the eternal blessings that God will shower on those He loves and has forgiven.

As mentioned above, “Nobody evades God. On the day of Judgment, God’s law will prove our guilt.” Each of us have sinned. God has only two responses to sin. He judges sin or He forgives sin. Judgment brings death. Forgiveness brings eternal life. Before closing this book, I have one final question for my readers. Are you forgiven?

SECTION FIVE



**LITURGY ENDNOTES
& BIBLIOGRAPHY**



LITURGY ENDNOTES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1 A Passover seder plate is a visual aid to teach our children about history, Scripture, miracles, atonement, and most importantly, about our God's power. The foods on the seder plate are pedagogic devices used to teach the participants what the Passover is about. Not to confuse, but to explain, it is a didactic tool. Some may be familiar with a famous Christian text known as the *Didache*. This ancient work is believed by some to have been written from between 65-80AD. In other words, it is likely that the *Didache* is the earliest Christian teaching of the Church—perhaps written as early as portions of the New Testament. The title, comes from the Greek word *didaskolos* (*dee-das'-kolos*) meaning "teacher." If this unimportant piece of information is boring, that is why it was buried in the end notes. You can skip all of these if you're not interested in such tidbits. Similarly, you may wish to ignore the end notes if you are easily offended by certain radical views that might leak out onto the pages of this section. They were intentionally hidden from sight in the main body of the liturgy.
- 2 This was done throughout Jewish history (whenever the Jewish people were walking in obedience to God). It is thought that the *korban pesach* was offered up by each Jew who went up to the Temple in Jerusalem. Although commanded by God in Exodus, the practice abruptly ended after the Romans destroyed the 2nd Temple (68-70 c.e.).
- 3 The groups were generally thought to have a minimum of ten people. It took that many people to eat an average lamb. Since nothing could remain, it all had to be eaten completely in one setting, hence the ten-person minimum. When larger groups were assembled, they needed an additional animal to ensure that everyone's hunger was satisfied. The rabbis decided that meant each person needed a piece of meat at least as large as an olive. Some of the rabbis may have also owned ancient Weight Watcher franchises. But probably not.
- 4 Mishna Pesachim 2:6. (See Rabbi Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Family Seder*, NY, Jonathan David Publishers, 1991 p. 3.)
- 5 Since the early 1980's, odd additions began surfacing on some seder plates during Passover. These were intended to symbolize the struggle of some Jews who felt marginalized. Some folks do end up on the fringe of society. Some feel like outcasts because of loss or circumstances beyond their control. Others are marginalized because their behavior makes the mainstream uncomfortable. That doesn't make all people at the fringe bad. For example, Jews who believe in Jesus (like me), have been relegated to the margins of Judaism due simply to differences in theological or eschatological conclusions. Whereas others who engage in unbiblical, aberrant sexual behavior are often unwelcome for other reasons. In biblical terms, it is a result

of sin. God loves sinners. God redeems sinners. Redemption is God's specialty. But God doesn't change His moral standards because someone's feelings are hurt.

My view may be troublesome to some gay or lesbian Jews who reject the biblical view of sexuality. I do not marginalize them. If they feel marginalized, it may be because of what the Bible declares about their lifestyle. And some may feel incapable of changing their desires. However, behavioral choices are often within the control of the individual. For example, monogamy, faithfulness, and even celibacy are more moral choices than philandering, unfaithfulness, or engaging in illicit sexual relationships forbidden by God. Immoral people cannot change what God has declared in the Scriptures to suit their preferences. They can freely reject the Bible. But changing it is not an intellectually honest option. So some seek to influence the beliefs, practices, and traditions of those who do believe the Bible. In recent decades, some Jewish LGBTQ folks began using Passover as an opportunity to promote their agenda. (As explained much earlier in this book, the new socially acceptable abbreviation is LGBTQQ1P2SAA.) They are free to live as they choose and love as they feel so compelled. Their choices do not alter the standards defined by God. As a result, their choices to reject God's standards place them in opposition to God. That is a legal choice in a free country. I believe it is unrealistic of them to expect others to give up their views of life and godliness to make them feel better about their choices. We are not keeping them in bondage because we don't agree with their lifestyle choices. And we are not stopping them from pursuing their sexual preferences. I disagree with those who attempt to usurp the biblical Passover account to promote unbiblical, ungodly behavior. Therefore, I reject such efforts to reinterpret Passover by adding an orange to the seder plate to promote an unbiblical view of life or sexuality by gay or lesbian Jews.

Another equally troublesome seder plate addition is that of the olive. Some Jews, who should know better, have changed the entire slave and taskmaster narrative. The olive has been added by some Jews who have unwittingly become the adversaries of Israel by supporting the anti-Semitic Palestinian cause. The "olive-thumpers" liken the evil of Pharaoh to the Israeli oppressors. Some characterize Palestinian terrorists as freedom-fighters. The olive is symbolic of those Palestinians allegedly held in bondage by the Jewish aggressors who oppress the enslaved people of the land. Those displaced from their olive groves by the wicked Israeli oppressors are the subject of the delusion. In lock step with most of the United Nations (UN), their agenda is to promote Israel as the enemy. I reject such calculated deceptions.

Those who depreciate Israel and amplify the false narrative that Israel is evil, promote the dangerous agenda of Hamas and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization—now the governing body known as the Palestinian National Authority). It seems odd that Jews would demand Israel relinquish its land and yield its sovereignty to those who are dedicated to destroying Israel and the Jews. I believe such depictions represent a wicked political agenda that is doomed. And I encourage adherents of such misguided views to gain a corrected understanding of historical facts or seek therapy to overcome their delusional hallucinations. Carefully researched treatises by qualified analysts and reporters, like Joan Peters, provide invaluable data. Her classic work, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*, is a powerful resource. Personally, I do not like olives. But everyone is free to pursue social justice however they feel comfortable. Surrendering to those who threaten to drive the Jews into

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oblivion is not an agenda I feel appropriate to promote at Passover. Pathetic as it might sound, some American Jews, and a share of the liberal Jews of Israel, actively promote the dangerous views I have described. When I hear such things, it strengthens my belief that, as a people, sometimes, we just cannot seem to get out of our own way.

For those who support the BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanction) movement aimed at crippling modern Israel's economy, consider a few facts:

The Israeli Arabs who work in the Israeli facilities being boycotted wish you would shut up. Your BDS nonsense is damaging the enterprises that feed their families. They have the best gigs going among Palestinians. Don't ruin it for them.

The alleged claim of Palestinian residence from time immemorial is an outright lie.

There has never been a Palestinian culture or language. They were, and they remain, Arabs.

Until after the 1967 Six Day War, there had never been a public outcry for a Palestinian state governed by Arab "Palestinians" anywhere, at any time, in human history. It is a modern contrivance.

Arabs occupy 99 ½% of the land mass of the Middle East. The microbe-sized fleck of land containing settlements on the remaining ½ of 1% speck of ground known as Israel is irrelevant to the terrorists. They want to destroy the Jews. Their peace plan asks for the land, little-by-little. Until they acquire 100%, no lasting peace is likely. Then, if the Jews can be driven into the sea, the "Palestinians" will soon demand our salt-water until they can peacefully return to fighting among themselves. Nobody but the God of Israel and the Jews really cared about Jerusalem until Jordan lost the Old City of Jerusalem in a war. Israel didn't want Jordan to get into that war. But when attacked by Jordan, Israel fought back. Israel won and reunited Jerusalem through divine intervention. Yes. I believe the God of Israel did this! On June 7, 1967, the Jewish people regained control of the holiest site on earth. The war lasted only 6 days. We won; they lost—no do-overs! God miraculously gave Jerusalem back to the rightful property owners. God has reunited His people with His land of promise and His "City of Peace"—Jerusalem. This is the will of God. Wake up and smell the falafel. I am thankful that a number of Muslim nations have finally recognized Israel and chosen to pursue peace and advancement by engaging in trade, travel, and progress for all parties involved.

To the enemies of Israel, and to the ill-informed liberal Jews deployed by the enemies of Israel, get over yourselves! Until 1967, there never was a Palestinian national movement. The barbaric Palestinian terrorists who murdered their way into international headlines as the PLO did not even exist until 1964. The spurious Palestinian claim on the land is a myth of epic proportions. It is an incredibly successful piece of propaganda believed by useful idiots everywhere. The 1967 Arab disaster of the Six Day War birthed the strategy that has since morphed into a political cause.

To every Jew who philosophically weaponizes an olive on their Passover seder plate—you missed the point of Passover. Remember the Red Sea? The Jews won. Their enemies lost. Thank God instead of schlepping back to Egypt to return everything God provided to us. Your leftist rhetoric about "occupied territories" is living proof

of the success of Arab propaganda in light of the epic failure of the Arab military.

To those Jews demanding Israel return lands to the pre-1967 borders, come back after you return the ground under your condo to the Indians, your Starbucks to the Mexicans, and your McDonald's to the British. They are all very recent "occupiers" compared to the Jews of Jerusalem who won a war with the Jebusites 3,000 years ago.

To those who believe the report of Arab propagandists, choose your sources more carefully. Why do you support Israel's enemies? The UN and much of the world are already against us. Do they need your help or do you just like the company of racists and anti-Semites? Look in the mirror little landsman. See the useful idiot?

- 6 Much of the Hebrew text contained in the liturgical section of this book from https://www.sefaria.org/Pesach_Haggadah?lang=bi
- 7 We usher in this celebration with the lighting of candles. Whereas it is normal to say the blessing prior to the mitzvah—good deed. In the case of candle-lighting, it is customary to light the candles first, and then say the blessing. This is because on the Sabbath, once the candles are lit, the Sabbath prohibitions are enforced in observant Jewish homes. Working (even lighting a match) is then prohibited until after sundown the following evening.
- 8 My wife lights festival and Sabbath candles in our home because this is what Jewish people do. It is worth noting that ancient Karaite Jews did not light Sabbath candles. Instead, they sat in darkness. Maimonides indirectly wrote against that view in his Mishnah Torah. He felt so strongly that he warned the Jews of his era to go begging if necessary and forego food if required to be able to buy their oil to kindle the Sabbath (or holiday) lights. The Karaites were very literal in how they interpreted the Hebrew Bible. They rejected the rabbinic traditions of the Oral Law which required the Bible to be more fluid. The rabbis recognized that the blessings for festival and Sabbath candles are flawed. We recite, "Blessed art Thou, Eternal our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us through Thy commandments and instructed us to kindle the holiday (or Sabbath) candles." However, no such biblical injunction exists! The sages were perplexed about this themselves. A group of rabbis gave themselves the authority to reinterpret the law and declare candle-lighting to be mandatory because they said so. The decision feels a bit like the Supreme Court reinterpreting parts of the Constitution to fit their opinions. The Karaites lost and the rabbis won. (See Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 262 & 334-335).
- 9 Several entertaining interpretations exist to explain the four cups of wine at Passover. Some suggest they represent the four kingdoms that subjugated Israel: Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Four lands of "exile" are also proposed as symbolic of the four cups: Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and this current world system for which we await Messiah to deliver us. Others provide a more esoteric view implying that Pharaoh's cup of wine was mentioned four times in the butler's dream of Genesis 40. I am satisfied simply saying we drink four times because it's the tradition. Personally, I like the redemption story best because I've been redeemed!
- 10 This prayer is typically recited during the first two nights of Passover. The rabbinic tradition suggests, "When the Egyptians were drowning in the Red Sea, God

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restrained the angels from singing his praise, saying, 'How can you sing while my creatures are drowning in the sea?' " For the same reason, only portions of the hallel are recited during the last six days. (See Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, (New York, Hebrew Publishing Co., 1964 page 585.) [The book gifted to me at my Bar Mitzvah by Temple Beth El.]

- 11 I love to say this prayer with our Holy land tour guests when we enter Jerusalem. It is always special to go "up"--aliyah to the City of God.
- 12 Some followers of Rambam and the Gaon of Vilna do choose to recite a blessing. No doubt, they were very nice fellows . . . but at our seder, we skip the blessing as prescribed in most traditional haggadot.
- 13 Mishnah Pesachim 119b.
- 14 Though not traditionally considered in a seder, I find several comparisons about the Aphikomen and Jesus to be illustrative and worthy of reflection: Like this unleavened bread, Jesus--the bread of life was without leaven. He was sinless. As this unleavened bread has been broken, the life of Jesus was broken and bruised. This matzah will now be hidden away in a linen cloth (matzah tash) until later when it will again be revealed at the appropriate time. We can envision a similar connection to the body of Jesus, being hidden in a tomb, wrapped in a linen grave cloth until the Resurrection. And at the end of this age, "that which comes after" will certainly be revealed. When Messiah comes, the Lamb of God will be made known to all. Those of us who rejoice in His love and recognize our Messiah, should declare these truths from the Word of God. May these words ring from our lips and remain in our hearts long after the taste of the Aphikomen has left our mouth at the end of this service.
- 15 There is a nonsense phrase "hocus pocus," used by conjurers and sleight of hand magicians. The phrase was borrowed from the Christian world. The Latin term for "this is the body" is hoc est corpus. It refers to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. We Protestants do not believe the communion wafer is magically transformed into a piece of the physical body of Jesus. It is symbolic. There is no hocus pocus in our "bread of affliction." But it does provide a reminder of our Blessed Hope in the light of Christ's sacrifice.

Sadly, hocus pocus appears to be a better description of what takes place in some circles when unrepentant sinners soothe their seared consciences with religious rituals. When our sins are forgiven, life is restored. When they are ignored, death is festering. Knowing the difference is a matter of faith and obedience to God's Word. When we take Communion, our lives should reflect the understanding of what Jesus did to purchase our salvation.
- 16 Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*. See quote from Arnold Eisen, 20.
- 17 Jewish tradition suggests this is the only language NOT understood by the angels. So why such a choice for telling a story? Because when there is poverty, we should not wait for the angels to help. For today, we are not helpless. We were poor. We were slaves in Egypt. Now we are free. Therefore, we must never forget and we must aid the poor and we must work for the deliverance of those who remain in bondage and oppressed. Therefore, Jewish people are wise

to live charitably and to stand with the oppressed. But we must never allow ourselves to become witless pawns in the propaganda games of our adversaries.

Whether or not the angels are really unable to speak Aramaic, I don't know. But what I do know is that during the 2nd century BCE, when this prayer came into common usage, Aramaic was the language of the Jewish masses in ancient Palestine. That seems like a good reason this Aramaic prayer has been retained in our Passover liturgy.

18 Jeffrey M. Cohen, 1001 Questions and Answers on Pesach, (Jason Aronson, Inc., Northvale, NJ, 1996) 107.

19 The more "evangelistic" element within traditional Judaism, often represented by Chabad, acknowledges a different Fifth Child. The following quote is from their website: https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/116264/jewish/A-Fifth-Son.htm

"Modern society has had an impact upon the Jewish people: today we have yet another son. The son who does not even attend a seder. Yes, it is true. There are many Jews out there who are not going to attend a seder this Passover. They can be put into three basic categories: 1) They have no place to attend. 2) They do not care to attend. 3) They do not know of Passover or its seder.

Just as there are answers for the Four Sons, there must be answers for this fifth son as well. For those who have nowhere to attend, we must aggressively advertise the invitation found within the Haggadah, 'All those who are hungry, let them come and eat! Whoever is in need, let him come and partake of the Passover!'

For those who do not care to attend, we must positively reinforce their Jewish identity and expose them to the beauty of Torah observance, in general, and of the seder in particular. Most importantly, we must communicate with them in a language they can understand and identify with.

Those who do not know that it is Passover or that there is such a thing as a seder are perhaps the most worrisome of the groups. Most likely, they do not have the fond memories of Passovers past. They are, in fact, in danger of losing their Jewish identity altogether, Gd forbid. As Jews, we are all responsible for the welfare of one another. We must therefore endeavor to introduce these people to their great inheritance, the Torah, the grandeur of their Judaism. If we should happen to see a person drowning, we would dive in to save him/her without thinking twice. We must, without delay, 'pull out all of the stops' to rescue those who need us most!

Let us aggressively seek out the Fifth Son, wherever or whoever she or he might be. Every lost Jew we bring back into the family may be compared to the discovery of a lost treasure of incalculable value.

It is not enough to just set an extra place at the seder table. Not anymore. We must fill the extra place with a warm body. We can then fill that warm body with the warmth that is Judaism.

Based on a call issued by the Lubavitcher Rebbe shortly before Passover of 1957" I find the sentiment they present in this quote to be both valuable and appropriate.

A Passover Backstory

- 20 For more information about the tragic facts of abortion in Israel, consider contacting the wonderful Israeli Pro-Life ministry of Beád Chaim. www.beadchaim.com
- 21 His Grandfather, also named Gamaliel, was Paul's teacher--Acts 22:3, and his wise advocacy saved Peter's life--Acts 5:34
- 22 According to the Torah, it was only the priests who were commanded to wash prior to the sacrificial meal. I think that is why Jesus was a bit troubled when the Pharisees asked why His disciples violated the traditions of the elders. They failed to wash when they ate bread (Mt. 15:2). Jesus turned it around and reminded them that the traditions of the elders sometimes exceeded or violated the commandments of God. As we all know, today there is no Temple in Jerusalem. We no longer have an altar. And no authorized priests offer animal sacrifices. But when His Holy Spirit lives in us, and through us, we become living temples for God's service. Be careful where you take God's temple and how you treat it. Every home should be a place of worship. Every meal can be a sanctified experience. And every believer is a priest. For this reason, this festival meal and the very act of eating can be transformed into a ritual filled with deep spiritual meaning.
- 23 CONSIDER THIS: It is one thing to remember the past. It is another thing to live in the past. Too many people carry their past into their future. They wear their pain like a badge that gives them permission to misbehave. Scars are not tickets to complain or demand understanding. A great Jewish teacher, Saul from Tarsus said, I'm gonna do one thing . . . "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13b-14 KJV). Every Passover we remember our past. But this is to help us pursue our blessed future.
- 24 A great rabbi who lived at the turn of the 1st millennium taught that there were actually 3 cooked dishes to be represented at the Passover seder. Therefore, Rav Sherira Gaon believed a fish should be added to the lamb bone and egg. For him, there were 3 mythic animals to be identified in the banquet that would usher in the messianic age. His view of the Midrashic tradition subsequently included a fish symbolizing the biblical Leviathan (See Hoffman 39 volume 1). I'm just guessing here my friends, but for me, that is a good enough reason to continue including some gefilte fish in our family seder. The equally mythical, wild, freshwater gefilte fish are best caught on live bait and immediately scaled, boned, boiled, and preserved in special jars opened just prior to the seder meal. In case you were curious, the comments about gefilte fish are purely apocryphal. Any serious angler knows they are a saltwater species. And I was merely angling for a cheap laugh. I made that stuff up. But everything else was relatively true. ☺
- 25 Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 286-287.
- 26 Two additional Jewish women should also be mentioned. Let us remember Mary, the mother of Jesus. This young Jewish girl became a mother in a very difficult situation at a very awkward time. We must also remember her much older relative Elisabeth. Had our culture been the dominant force of that ancient era, an unmarried, pregnant, little girl from a poor family would have been sent to Planned Parenthood. Her baby would have been aborted in a room next to Elisabeth. The old lady was barren throughout her entire marriage. A late-in-life, unexpected pregnancy would

now be cause for fear instead of celebration. Modern experts may have advised against an older woman carrying a child to birth. Abortion might have been advised to avoid risk to the mother or a potentially unhealthy fetus. We thank God that these miraculous events were part of His salvation plan of the ages. John the Baptist was a healthy living infant in the womb of Elisabeth. An unborn “fetus” was the first to recognize and acknowledge the soon-coming birth of our Messiah Jesus.

- 27 Every non-Jewish believer in Jesus may wish to remember that they have been adopted into the family of God. A review of Romans chapters 8-11 provides great insights into this truth.
- 28 Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals, History & Observance*, 80-81.
- 29 Michigan Congresswoman, Rashida Tlaib tweeted comments in 2020 from articles written by Hanan Ashrawi “the founder of the antisemitic, terrorist-apologist organization known as MIFTAH, the group that offered to sponsor Tlaib and Rep. Ilhan Omar’s (D-Minn.) trip to Israel last year before Israel denied them both entry for their involvement with anti-Israel movements. For those unfamiliar, MIFTAH has published an article claiming the blood libel against Jews to be true, a lie that accuses Jews of murdering Christian children in order to use their blood to make matzah at Passover.” <https://thefederalist.com/2020/01/27/rashida-tlaib-retweets-modern-day-blood-libel-and-media-remains-silent/>
- 30 Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals, History & Observance*. 56-58.
- 31 *Ibid.* 56 (Mishnah Pesachim X, 6).
- 32 It is my prayer that Jerusalem remain Israel’s undivided, eternal capital. I am personally grateful that the American Embassy and embassies from other nations have finally been moved to Jerusalem. Passover has always been a powerful reminder to the nation of Israel that we must celebrate redemption. The result of the First Jewish Revolt brought the destruction of Herod’s Temple in approximately 70 CE. In the immediate aftermath of the Second Jewish Revolt (approximately 135 CE), Rome’s scorched earth policy nearly wiped Israel’s capital, Jerusalem, off the earth. The Romans functionally removed Israel from the map by changing its identity to the derogatory name of Philistia or Palestine. The Philistines were Israel’s ancient arch enemies. Pagan Rome inaugurated the worst possible insult to God’s people by renaming it Palestine. That is why I wince when people use this intentional insult to refer to Israel. It was the description given to God’s property by God’s enemies. A similar fate happened to Jerusalem. Roman Emperor Hadrian changed the name to Aelia Capitolina. The name represented the pagan god Jupiter to whom the city was dedicated and to whom a temple was built. Jupiter Capitolinus was an insult to the Jews who had been exiled from their eternal capital—Jerusalem. God has restored our capital. I give Him praise.

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SECTION SIX

PRIMARY BIBLE TEXTS RELEVANT TO PASSOVER FROM BOTH THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES AND THE CHRISTIAN NEW TESTAMENT

(Used by permission from The Tree Of Life Version of the Bible)



PRIMARY BIBLE TEXTS RELEVANT TO PASSOVER FROM BOTH THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES AND THE CHRISTIAN NEW TESTAMENT

QUESTION:

WHY OBSERVE THE BIBLICAL FESTIVAL OF PASSOVER?

ANSWERED FROM:

THE TREE OF LIFE MESSIANIC JEWISH BIBLE (TLV)

God (ADONAI) established His covenant promise with the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses was called to lead the children of Israel (Bnei-Yisrael) out of bondage from Egypt. In so doing, God's covenant was extended to the entire nation of Israel.

God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am ADONAI. ³I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, as *El Shaddai*. Yet by My Name, ADONAI, did I not make Myself known to them. ⁴I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage where they journeyed. ⁵Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of *Bnei-Yisrael*, whom the Egyptians are keeping in bondage. So I have remembered My covenant. ⁶Therefore say to *Bnei-Yisrael*: I am ADONAI, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷I will take you to Myself as a people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am

ADONAI your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸So I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, and give it to you as an inheritance. I am ADONAI.” (*Exodus 6:2-8*)

Passover requirements explained for sacrifice of a paschal lamb, the required blood covering, the eating of unleavened bread (*matzot*) and bitter herbs, a hasty departure from Egypt, and the command to remove all leaven (*hametz*).

Now ADONAI spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, ²“This month will mark the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family one lamb for the household. ⁴But if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor are to take one according to the number of the people. According to each person eating, you are to make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb is to be without blemish, a year old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You must watch over it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They are to take the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the crossbeam of the houses where they will eat it. ⁸They are to eat the meat that night, roasted over a fire. With *matzot* and bitter herbs⁹ they are to eat it. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled with water, but only roasted with fire—its head with its legs and its innards. ¹⁰So let nothing of it remain until the morning. Whatever remains until the morning you are to burn with fire. ¹¹Also you are to eat it this way: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it in haste. It is ADONAI’s Passover. ¹²“For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and strike down every firstborn, both men and animals, and I will execute judgments against

all the gods of Egypt. I am *ADONAI*.¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. So there will be no plague among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.¹⁴ “This day is to be a memorial for you. You are to keep it as a feast to *ADONAI*. Throughout your generations you are to keep it as an eternal ordinance.¹⁵ For seven days you are to eat *matzot*, but on the first day you must remove *hametz* from your houses, for whoever eats *hametz* from the first day until the seventh day, that soul will be cut off from Israel. (*Exodus 12:1-15*)

God detailed the required festival observances and subsequent punishment for disobedience. Passover brought deliverance to God’s people. Their release followed the horrific 10th plague which brought “the destroyer” and death to every firstborn male in Egypt. Israel’s salvation was followed by the corporate worship of God by His people. Homes covered by the blood of the lamb were spared from tragic suffering. In remembrance of God’s miraculous deliverance, this festival was ordained to be celebrated in perpetuity by those who serve *ADONAI*.

For seven days no *hametz* is to be found in your houses, for whoever eats *hametz*, that soul will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an outsider or one who is born in the land.²⁰ You are to eat no *hametz*; in all your houses you are to eat *matzot*.”²¹ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go, select lambs for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb.²² You are to take a bundle of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply it to the crossbeam and two doorposts with the blood from the basin. None of you may go out the door of his house until morning.²³ *ADONAI* will pass through to strike down the Egyptians, but when He sees the blood on the crossbeam and the two doorposts, *ADONAI* will pass over that door, and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses

to strike you down. ²⁴Also you are to observe this event as an eternal ordinance, for you and your children. ²⁵“When you come into the land which *ADONAI* will give you as He has promised, you are to keep this ceremony. ²⁶Now when it happens that your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ ²⁷You are to say, ‘It is the sacrifice of *ADONAI*’s Passover, because He passed over the houses of *Bnei-Yisrael* in Egypt, when He struck down the Egyptians, but spared our households.” So the people bowed their heads and worshipped. ²⁸Then *Bnei-Yisrael* went and did it. They did just as *ADONAI* had commanded Moses and Aaron. ²⁹So it came about at midnight that *ADONAI* struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh sitting on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn cattle.³⁰Then Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was loud wailing in Egypt. For there was not a house where someone was not dead. ³¹So he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, “Rise up, go out from my people, both you and *Bnei-Yisrael*, go, serve *ADONAI* (*Exodus 12:19-31a*)

The “Last Supper” is described in all four Gospels. It was the final Passover *seder* of Yeshua HaMaschiach—Jesus Christ.

Now on the first day of *matzah*, the disciples came to *Yeshua*, saying, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and tell him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near; at your house I am to keep the Passover with My disciples.”’” ¹⁹The disciples did as *Yeshua* had ordered them, and they prepared the Passover. ²⁰Now when it was evening, *Yeshua* was reclining at the table with the Twelve. (*Matthew 26:17-20*)

Now on the first day of *matzah*, when they were slaughtering the Passover lamb, *Yeshua*'s disciples say to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" ¹³ He sends two of His disciples and tells them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, tell the homeowner, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" ¹⁵ He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." ¹⁶ The disciples went out, came to the city, and found just what *Yeshua* had told them. And they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷ When it was evening, He came with the Twelve. (*Mark 14:12-17*)

Then came the day of *matzah* when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ Now *Yeshua* sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so we may eat." ⁹ Then they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" ¹⁰ And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹ And say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" ¹² And with that, he will show you a large upper room, fully furnished. Make preparations there." ¹³ So they left and found just what *Yeshua* had told them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴ When the hour came, *Yeshua* reclined at table, and the emissaries with Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will never eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And when He had taken a cup and offered the *bracha*, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that I will never drink of the fruit of the vine from now on, until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And when He had taken *matzah* and offered the *bracha*, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, given for you. Do this in memory of Me."

²⁰In the same way, He took the cup after the meal, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.
(*Luke 22:7-20*)

Now it was just before the feast of Passover. *Yeshua* knew that His hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them until the end.² While the *seder* meal was happening . . . (*John 13:1-2a*)

The Apostle Paul compares sin to *hametz*. He warns followers of *Yeshua* to “get rid of” such *hametz*. It is revealed that the Messiah is our Passover Lamb and we should “celebrate the feast . . . (with) *matzah* of sincerity and truth.”

Your boasting is no good. Don’t you know that a little *hametz* leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old *hametz*, so you may be a new batch, just as you are unleavened—for Messiah, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast not with old *hametz*, the *hametz* of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread—the *matzah* of sincerity and truth.
(*1st Corinthians 5:6-8*)

Communion instituted by Paul based on the directions given by *Yeshua* at His final Passover *seder*.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you—that the Lord *Yeshua*, on the night He was betrayed, took *matzah*; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which

is for you. Do this in memory of Me.”²⁵ In the same way, He also took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in memory of Me.”²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.²⁷ Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the Lord’s cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.²⁸ But a man must examine himself, and then let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup.²⁹ For the one who eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. (*1st Corinthians 11:23-29*)

The biblical festival of Passover was ordained by God to ensure that His miraculous deliverance was remembered by His people through every generation forever. Messiah Yeshua has become our Passover Lamb. His sacrifice provides deliverance to all Jews and Gentiles who believe. Together, we are “one new man” called to live in peace (*shalom*). Therefore, the blessing of Passover is no longer limited to being a Jewish celebration. By grace, Gentiles have been welcomed into the commonwealth of Israel and should celebrate our shared history.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves—it is the gift of God.⁹ It is not based on deeds, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship—created in Messiah Yeshua for good deeds, which God prepared beforehand so we might walk in them.¹¹ Therefore, keep in mind that once you—Gentiles in the flesh—were called “uncircumcision” by those called “circumcision” (which is performed on flesh by hand).¹² At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah.¹⁴ For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down

the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility—¹⁵ the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations. He did this in order to create within Himself one new man from the two groups, making shalom,¹⁶ and to reconcile both to God in one body through the cross—by which He put the hostility to death.¹⁷ And He came and proclaimed shalom to you who were far away and shalom to those who were near —¹⁸ for through Him we both have access to the Father by the same Ruach.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.²⁰ You have been built on the foundation made up of the emissaries and prophets, with Messiah Yeshua Himself being the cornerstone.²¹ In Him the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple for the Lord.²² In Him, you also are being built together into God’s dwelling place in the Ruach.

(Ephesians 2:8-22)

SECTION SEVEN

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