

## Preparing for the Seder

*Be sure you have read the document "Preparing for the Seder."*

## Before you Begin

*Tonight, we join in a Seder meal, the traditional celebration of the Passover. It was at a Passover Seder like this that Jesus shared his last meal with his disciples. It was a Passover Seder that Jesus changed to introduce the Lord's Supper. Before you begin, here are a few notes to reflect on.*

- **Participating In:** *The Passover celebrates the moment when God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt more than 3000 years ago. Only, Jews would not describe it that way. They would not say, "the Israelites," or even "our ancestors," but rather, "when God **delivered us.**" This is important. This is more than just a remembrance, as we typically understand that word. Tonight, we are **participating in** the events of Passover. This participation reminds us that just as God was faithful to his people during the time of the Ten Plagues and the Exodus, so God is faithful to his people during the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic. This idea of "participating in" is also has an important connection to Holy Communion, of which the Passover meal was the fore runner. When we celebrate communion, we are not just remembering, but celebrating and **participating in** the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the salvation he won there for us.*
- **A Family Meal:** *Passover was celebrated as a **family meal**. It was meant for kids to be included. There will be wiggles, and we know that. That's okay. There will be powerful, experiential learning that goes on as kids ask, "why are we doing this?" and the faith is passed on from parents to children.*
- **An Extended Family, on Mission Together:** *If a family was too small for a whole lamb, families would join together to celebrate the Passover. Normally, we gather to celebrate the Seder meal as a church family. This year, because of COVID-19, we are scattered and celebrate it in our own homes. And yet, we are*

still a community of believers, following Jesus together. This is a great picture of the church, an **extended family, on mission together**, sometimes gathered and sometimes scattered, but always united in Christ. Even as we eat separately, remember that union, and continue to pray and connect with each other.

- This is a simplified form, pulled from many different sources. While most is in English, a few key Hebrew phrases remain. One of those phrases serves as a sort of liturgical introduction to each of the major sections. That phrase is “Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu,” which means “Blessed are you, O Lord our God...” It is the first line of a series of traditional Jewish prayers prayed throughout the evening.
- The ‘head of the family’ should read the parts marked with an ‘L.’ The rest of the family should read the parts marked with a ‘C.’

# ORDER OF WORSHIP



## The Shemah

- L** Shemah Yisrael Adonai Eloheynu Adonai Echad
- C** Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. (*Deuteronomy 6:4*)



## Blessing over the Candles

- L** Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu
- C** Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you have kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season. May this place be made holy by the light of your presence, shining upon us in blessing and giving us peace.

- L** It is most fitting that it is a woman who kindles the lights, for we are reminded of God’s promise that the Messiah, the Light of the world, would come not from the seed of man, but from the seed of a woman and by the will of God. As the prophet Isaiah declared:

**Women: A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel;**

**C A light to the Gentiles**

**L** And the glory of your people Israel.

**C Amen.**

*Candles are lit by the “matriarch” of the table.*



## The Washing of Hands

**L** Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu

**C Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you have blessed us with your commandments, that we might serve you with pure and holy hands.**

**L** The washing of hands during the Passover meal symbolized the inner cleansing necessary for those participating in the service. It was probably at this time that our Lord Jesus went one step further, and washed his disciples’ feet, taking on the role of a servant.

*There is a wet washcloth on the table. The “patriarch” of the family takes on this role, washing the hands of each of his family members. As you do so, speak a word of blessing, a prayer, or a word of affirmation over each person as you wash their hands.*



## The First Cup: The Cup of Sanctification

*When you have finished washing your hands, you will need to fill your wine cups. Like everything else at the Seder, even simple drinking is done in honor of the Lord, recognizing his blessing that makes everything possible. ...Hold your glasses high as you pray:*

- L** Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu
- C** **Blessed are you, O Lord our God, for you have created the fruit of the vine. With this cup, we commit our observance to the Lord and pray for His blessing on all the rest of the service that follows.**
- L** It was concerning the first cup that Jesus declared,
- C** **“Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”**  
(Luke 22:18)

*Everyone takes a drink, in honor of the Lord.*



## The Four Questions

- L** The Passover was celebrated as a family meal, year after year. Each year, the children of the family would observe what was going on, and ask questions, and learn about the faith. Over time, four specific questions were developed, which were asked by the youngest child present, to assist in telling the story.  
Child: Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat either leavened bread or unleavened; on this night we only eat unleavened. Why?
- C** **We eat the unleavened bread to remember that the sons of Israel, in their haste to leave Egypt, had to take their bread with them while it was still flat.**

Child: On all other nights we eat any manner of herbs. Why do we only eat bitter herbs on this night?

**C We eat the bitter herb to remind us of how bitter it is to be enslaved.**

Child: On all other nights, we do not dip even once, tonight we dip twice. Why?

**C By dipping, we remember that a life of bondage is bitter indeed, but that even the bitterest of labor is sweetened with the promise of redemption.**

Child: On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining; tonight, we all recline. Why?

**C Tonight, we all recline, showing freedom in the Messiah, for we are no longer slaves to sin.**



## The Matzo

**L** And now we take the Matzo, the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat!

**C But what is the meaning of the unleavened bread?**

**L** At the first Passover, unleavened bread was eaten because the meal was to be eaten in haste; the Israelites were preparing to flee from Egypt. Throughout the Bible, though, leaven is commonly used as a symbol of sin. In olden times, a small piece of dough from the previous loaf was used to leaven an entire portion of fresh dough. Thus the leaven of each batch of dough was related to the original loaf. In the same way, we are related through the generations to the sin of our first forefather, Adam. And as the leaven in the dough causes the bread to rise, so the sin of our life causes us to rise in our eyes, to become puffed up.

**C But on this night, we eat nothing but unleavened bread. So we demonstrate our desire to be cleansed of sin, and to live lives that are devoted entirely to the Lord.**

**L** At this point in the meal, a piece of matzo is broken into three pieces. The middle piece, called the Afikomen, is hidden until later.

Later, a game would be played where the children (under 12) would try to find this missing piece. The one who finds it would receive a small reward. You may wish to wrap the Afikomen in a napkin and hide it somewhere in the house.



## The Seder Plate

- L** On your table is a special Seder plate, containing several traditional symbols, that help tell the story of the Passover.
- C** **What do they mean, and of what do they speak?**
- L** The story of Passover is a story of our deliverance from bondage, and all of the elements of the Passover meal are part of the portrait of redemption.
- L** The first is *karpas*, the parsley.
- C** **What is the meaning of the *karpas*, the greens and the salt water?**
- L** The greens represent life, and the salt water represents the tears of life. Before we eat the greens, we dip them into the salt water.

*All dip the parsley in the salt water and eat.*

- L** Next is *maror*, horseradish.
- C** **And what is the meaning of the *maror*, the bitter herb?**
- L** As we eat the horseradish, we are reminded of how bitter life is without redemption. Let us eat the bitter herb.

*All eat some horseradish on some matzoh.*

- L** Next is *charoseth*, a mixture of apples and nuts.
- C** **What is the meaning of the *charoseth*, and why is it so sweet to the taste?**
- L** The *charoseth* is a reminder of the mortar with which the Israelites made bricks for Pharaoh.
- C** **But why should a sweet mixture remind us of a bitter labor?**
- L** Because even the bitterest of labor is made sweet with God's promise of redemption.

*All eat some charoseth with matzoh.*

**L** Next is the *hagigah*, the roasted egg.

**C** **What is the meaning of the *hagigah*?**

**L** Hagigah was the name given to the daily Temple sacrifices in ancient Jerusalem. It is roasted just as the daily offerings were burned with fire upon the altar of the Lord. And we dip the hagigah into the salt water to remember these sacrifices with tears. As the Temple is no longer standing, so there can be no sacrifices.

**C** **So, we too, as followers of Jesus, dip the hagigah into the salt water today.**

**L** For he is our sacrifice, and there are over four billion Gentiles and nearly 14 million Jewish people today who have yet to acknowledge Jesus as their sacrifice.

**C** **The eternal consequences of their unbelief bring tears to our eyes.**

*All dip egg into salt water and eat.*

**L** Last is the *zaroah*, the shank bone of the lamb.

**C** **And what is the meaning of the *zaroah*?**

**L** Lamb was eaten at the first Passover. Blood from the lamb was placed on the doorposts of the homes of the Israelites, and when God brought the final plague on the Egyptians, he passed over the homes of those marked with blood. As the story of Scripture continued to unfold, the Passover lamb was revealed as a type of prophecy, pointing forward to the coming of Christ.

**C** **“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”**  
*(John 1:29)*

**L** While non-believing Jews do not eat lamb today, because the temple has not been restored, still the shank bone reminds us that Jesus is the true lamb, who has taken away our sin.



## The Second Cup of Wine: The Cup of Deliverance

- L** Pharaoh defied the Lord and placed his will over the Lord's. As a result, he brought destruction upon his house and land. How often do we, like Pharaoh, choose our desires over God's directions? And how often do we, like Pharaoh, bring harm upon ourselves and those we care for most? Because we share with Pharaoh the sin of disobedience, and because we regard all people as God's creation, we do not rejoice over the destruction visited upon the Egyptians.
- C** **We mourn their loss, and express sorrow over their destruction.**
- L** Even though we are celebrating our liberation, our happiness is not complete as long as others remain bound to slavery and death. A full cup is a symbol of full joy. And so, we diminish this cup to show our diminished joy because of the ongoing consequences of sin. As we name each of the ten plagues, we dip our finger into the cup, and then onto our napkin.
- C** **Blood....Frogs....Gnats....Flies....Livestock....Boils....Hail....Locusts.... Darkness....Death of the Firstborn.**
- L** Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu
- C** **Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who creates the fruit of the vine.**

# DINNER

*During dinner, you may wish to play your favorite worship songs. This simulates the Hallel, the singing of songs of praise.*

# ORDER OF WORSHIP *(continued)*



## The Finding of the Afikomen

*Children are invited to search for the Afikomen. A reward is often given to the child who finds it.*

- L** The Afikomen is certainly one of the more delightful moments of the Passover Seder. And yet, some mystery surrounds the significance of the Afikomen and the matzoh from which it was drawn. We may justly ask:
- C** **What is the meaning of the three matzohs, and why was the middle matzoh broken, buried, and then brought back?**
- L** Some teach that the three matzohs represent a unity of the three patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- C** **Then why is the middle matzoh broken, buried, and then brought back?**
- L** Others say that the three matzohs represent the community of Israel united in three groups: the Priests, the Levites, and the rest of Israel.
- C** **Then why is the middle matzoh broken, buried, and then brought back?**
- L** Tonight, we can see that there is a third explanation suggested here. Tradition has set down very specific rules concerning matzoh if it is fit for use at Passover.
- L** First, it must be without leaven, the leaven of sin.
- C** **As Jesus was without sin.**
- L** Second, it must be striped.
- C** **As was Jesus. For the Prophet Isaiah says, “And with his stripes, we are healed.”**
- L** Third, it must be pierced.
- C** **As was Jesus. For the Prophet Zechariah says: “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”**

- L** The matzoh is called the bread of affliction, a reminder of the suffering in Egypt. But it is also called the bread of life.
- C** **Jesus said, “I am the bread of Life. Whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”**
- L** The matzoh, one piece, is broken into three pieces. Just so, our God has revealed himself as a mysterious Trinity, a three-in-one.
- C** **Then why is the middle matzoh broken, buried, and then brought back?**
- L** Because Jesus was broken, buried, and then brought back. With his return comes great celebration! Here in the matzoh, in the Seder meal celebrated by Jews across the centuries, is a sign pointing them to the promised Messiah who has come for them, and for all people!



## The Third Cup – The Cup of Redemption

- L** The wine at Passover is red to remind us of the blood of those first Passover lambs. For with the shedding of blood of those first lambs, our people were redeemed from their bondage and slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. In the same way, we can see that it is through the blood of Jesus that we are redeemed from our bondage and slavery into sin. It was this cup that Jesus would have used as he instituted Holy Communion.
- L** Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu
- C** **Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the foundation of the world you chose us to be your children. You have liberated us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your dear Son, the very image and reflection of your glory. In him we have received redemption and the forgiveness of sins.**

*It is a marvelous mystery how Christ took a meal that was a remembrance of God’s work in the past and a foreshadowing of his redemption on the cross, and transformed it into means that brings us his grace each time we partake.*

*This is the point in our Seder meal when we as a church would ordinarily celebrate communion. As we are scattered this year, we refrain from communion and instead look forward to the day when we can gather and celebrate communion together again.*



## The Fourth Cup—The Cup of Restoration

**L** Baruch Attah Adonai Eloheynu

**C** Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you have chosen us in Christ to be your people Israel.

*Drink the last of your wine and grape juice.*

**L** This marks the conclusion of the Seder Meal. But for the disciples, and for us, there is more to come, as Jesus moves closer and closer to the cross...



## Reading | Luke 22:39-46

<sup>39</sup> And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” <sup>41</sup> And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” <sup>43</sup> And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. <sup>44</sup> And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. <sup>45</sup> And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

*Reflect and meditate on the great and unconditional love God has given in sending Jesus to be our Savior.*