

Passover for Christians

A Haggadah

CELEBRATING PASSOVER: THE SEDER

Adapted from
Family Celebrations at Easter
By
Ann Hibbard

The Candles

Leader (*eldest male of the family*)

As we light these candles tonight, we pray that God will light our hearts with his Holy Spirit. We want to understand how God has redeemed his people.

The woman of the house (*lighting the candles*)

Blessed are you, O lord our God, King of the universe. You have made us your own. We light these festival lights in your Name.

The Four Cups of Wine

Leader

When the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt, God heard their cries. He chose Moses to lead them out of Egypt. These are the four promises that God made to Moses.

Reader 1: “I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians”

Reader 2: “I will free you from being slaves.”

Reader 3: “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.”

Reader 4: “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.”

Leader

We remember these four promises at Passover by drinking from our cups four times. The first is called the Cup of Sanctification, the second, the Cup of the Plagues, the third, the Cup of Redemption, and the fourth, the Cup of Praise.

The Cup of Sanctification

Leader (*pouring wine into each cup*)

(If you elect to fill the cup each time, instruct the family to drink only one sip when it is time to drink the cup. If you want to drain the cup each time, pour only a small amount into the cups each time you are to fill them.)

This is the Cup of Sanctification or setting apart as holy.

Reader 1: “I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.”

Family (*lifting their cups*)

Blessed are you, O lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. (*All drink.*)

The Hand Washing

Leader

We wash our hands to remind us that God is holy. As we come before him, we too must be holy. As it is written:

Reader 4:

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.” (Psalm 24:3,4)

Leader (*lifting the basin of water*)

Let us share together in this hand washing ceremony.

(*Pass the bowl. Each person dips his hands and passes the bowl to the next person.*)

Leader

Let us also remember how Jesus took off his clothes and, wearing a towel, washed the feet of his disciples. In doing this, he showed that he came as a humble servant. We know that this water cannot really make our hearts clean. The only way that our hearts can be made pure and holy is by Jesus' greatest act of servanthood, his death on the cross.

The Karpas (pronounced KAR-pas)

Leader

We now remember the tears of the Hebrew people when they were slaves in Egypt. As it is written:

Reader 2: “The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.” (Exodus 2:23)

Leader (*lifting the parsley - celery may be substituted for parsley*)

Passover comes in the spring, when we see new life around us. The *karpas*, or parsley, reminds us that life is a gift to us from our great

and mighty God. The *karpas* is also like the hyssop plant that was used to smear the blood of the lamb on the doorframe.

(lifting the salt water)

When the Hebrews were slaves in Egypt, life was not easy. It was full of pain, suffering, and tears. This salt water stands for their tears.

Family *(dipping their parsley in salt water)*

Blessed are you, O lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth. *(All eat karpas.)*

The Breaking of the Middle Matzah

Leader *(lifting the Unity, or the plate which holds the three matzo wrapped in napkins)*

At Passover, three matzos are wrapped together. They are called the “Unity”. Jewish teachers have many explanations for this. We who know Jesus look at the Unity and see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

(Leader takes the middle matzah out of the Unity, breaks it in two, replaces one half and wraps the other half in a linen cloth for the afikomen.)

I have taken the middle matzah and broken it in half. One half is wrapped and hidden. This is called the *afikomen* (pronounced *ah-fee-KOH-men*), and it is an important part of the *Seder* that comes after the meal. *(hides the afikomen)*.

The Four Questions

Leader

We now ask and answer the four questions. As it is written:

Reader 3: “When your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them.” (Exodus 12:26)

A Young Child

Why is this night different from all other nights?

- 1) On all other nights, we eat leavened bread. On this night, why do we eat matzah, or unleavened bread?
- 2) On all other nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables. On this night, why do we eat only bitter herbs?

- 3) On all other nights, we do not dip our vegetables even once. On this night, why do we dip them twice?
- 4) On all other nights, we eat our meals sitting. On this night, why do we eat only reclining?

Leader

God has commanded us to answer these questions for our children. But we do so with thankful hearts, for the answers point to the great and mighty works of God.

Leader (*lifting one matzah*)

On all other nights we eat leavened bread, but on Passover we eat only matzah. This reminds us that when the Hebrew people fled from Egypt, they did not have time to let the bread rise. Jesus often compared yeast, which makes bread rise, with sin. He came to die and take away our sin.

Leader (*lifting the maror, pronounced mah-ROAR*)

On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, but on Passover we eat only *maror*, or bitter herbs. This reminds us of how bitter life was for the Israelites in Egypt. It also reminds us of life in slavery to sin.

Leader (*lifting the charoseth, pronounced hah-ROH-seth*)

On all other nights we do not dip our vegetables even once, but tonight we dip them twice. We have already dipped our parsley in salt water. Now we will dip our bitter herbs into sweet kharoset. This mixture reminds us of the mortar and bricks which the Israelites were forced to make as slaves in Egypt.

Leader

On all other nights we eat sitting up, but tonight we eat reclining. This is to remind us that now we are free from slavery. On the first Passover, God's people had to eat in a hurry, with their coats and sandals on, holding their staffs in their hands as they waited to be delivered from slavery. Now, we may relax and enjoy this feast at our leisure.

The Story of Passover

Leader

Now we tell the story of Passover.

Reader 1

Long ago, the Lord brought Abraham to the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that this land would belong to his descendants. Abraham's grandson Jacob left that land and moved with his family to Egypt to escape a famine. Jacob's family grew, becoming a people, the Israelites. Several hundred years passed, and by this time, they had become a huge nation. The Pharaoh, or ruler of Egypt, feared that they would join Egypt's enemies and fight against Egypt. So Pharaoh decided to make them his slaves. Even so, God blessed them with more and more children.

Reader 2

Even though Moses grew up in Pharaoh's court, he knew that he was an Israelite. He saw how the Egyptians mistreated his people. One day, when he saw an Egyptian being cruel to an Israelite, Moses lost his temper and killed the Egyptian. He ran away from Egypt into a desert land where he worked as a shepherd.

Reader 3

The Lord heard the cries of the Israelites as they suffered at the hands of the Egyptians. He came to Moses in a burning bush and told Moses to go to Pharaoh. Moses was afraid, but he finally agreed that with the help of his brother, Aaron, he would go to Pharaoh and deliver God's message to "Let my people go!"

The Cup of Plagues

Leader

Pharaoh did not want to let his people go. Every time Pharaoh said no to Moses, God sent a plague or disaster to Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh hardened his heart and kept saying no. The tenth time, God sent the most awful plague. This plague caused Pharaoh to change his mind.

Family

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt; I am the Lord." (Exodus 12:12)

Leader

It was the Lord himself who passed over us and struck down the firstborn of the Egyptians. In this way he delivered us from slavery. As it is written:

On that same night I will pass through Egypt.

Family

I, and not an angel.

Leader

And strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--

Family

I, and not a seraph.

Leader

And I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt;

Family

I, and not a messenger.

Leader

I am the Lord.

Family

I, myself, and none other. (Exodus 12:12)

Leader (*filling the cups*)

We fill our cups a second time to remember that many people died during the plagues, especially the last one, in order that God's people would be set free. We also remember what it cost for us to be set free from sin and death--the lifeblood of Jesus. As it is written:

Reader 2:

"I will free you from being slaves."

Leader

Each of the plagues focused on a being that the Egyptians worshiped. As we say each plague, we dip our finger into the cup and drip the liquid onto our plate. Think about how God showed himself much greater than all the gods of Egypt.

Family (*each plague is said loudly in unison while dipping a finger and letting a drop of wine fall onto the plate*)

BLOOD! FROGS! GNATS! FLIES! CATTLE DISEASE! BOILS!
HAIL! LOCUSTS! DARKNESS! DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN!
(*Do not drink the cup yet.*)

The Dayenu

(*pronounced die-AY-noo, meaning “it would have been sufficient”*)

Leader

God has been so good to us! We do not deserve his great and numerous blessings. Any one of his acts of mercy would have been enough to show his love for us.

Reader 1

With loving kindness he redeemed His people from Egypt, bringing judgment on the Egyptians and their gods.

Family

Dayenu.

Reader 2

With awesome power he divided the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to pass over in safety.

Family

Dayenu.

Reader 3

With tender care he protected them in the wilderness, feeding them with manna and providing for their needs.

Family

Dayenu.

Reader 4

With great goodness he gave us the Law on Mt. Sinai.

With triumph he led His people into the promised land of Israel.

Family (*lifting their cups*)

Dayenu! How many are your great blessings to us. For each act of goodness we are abundantly grateful. Most of all, we are thankful for Jesus the Christ. In him we have forgiveness of sins and abundant and everlasting life. Hallelujah!

(*Drink the second cup of wine.*)

The Passover Lamb

Leader (*lifting the shankbone of the lamb*)

This shankbone of lamb reminds us of the lamb that each Israelite family killed on the night of the first Passover. God commanded them to take the blood of the lamb and put on the top and the sides of the doorframe of their houses. As it is written:

Reader 1

“Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs.”

(Exodus 12:7)

Reader 2

“That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast.” (Exodus 12:8)

Reader 3

“This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste, it is the Lord’s Passover.” (Exodus 12:11)

Reader 4

“The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.” (Exodus 12:13)

Leader

We who trust in Jesus the Christ believe that he is our Passover lamb. Just as it was God himself who redeemed the Israelites, so it is God himself, in the person of Jesus the Christ, who redeemed us once and for all from sin and death. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Leader (*lifting the roasted egg*)

This roasted egg is a special Passover offering. It is a symbol of mourning, reminding us of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is also a sign of new and eternal life. It is because of Jesus, our Passover lamb, that we can have eternal life.

The Matzah

Leader (*lifts the Unity*)

Family

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Leader (*takes the middle matzah from the unity, breaks it into olive size pieces, and distributes it to the family*)

Let us now share the unleavened bread of Passover.

Family (*holding the piece of matzah*)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You set us apart as your people and commanded us to eat unleavened bread.

(*All eat.*)

The Maror

Leader (*Pass horseradish. Each person scoops some onto a piece of matzah.*)

Family (*lifting matzah with bitter herbs*)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your Word and commanded us to eat bitter herbs. (*All eat.*)

Leader

The bitter herb reminds us of the persecution and suffering under the cruel hand of Pharaoh. Just as the horseradish brings tears to our eyes now, so then did that great suffering bring tears to their eyes.

The Charoseth

Leader (*Takes two pieces from the bottom matzah and puts between them the charoseth, in a sandwich-like fashion. Pass charoseth. Each person scoops charoseth onto a piece of matzah.*)

Leader

It was at this point in the Passover *Seder* that Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him. When each asked, "Surely, not I?" Jesus said that it was the one who dipped his bread into the bowl with Jesus.

The Passover Supper

(Leader offers prayer of thanks for the meal. Supper is served and eaten.)

The Eating of the Afikomen

(After the meal, the children hunt for the afikomen, the wrapped and hidden matzah from the Unity. The leader ransoms it back by paying money to the child who finds it.)

Leader *(unwrapping the matzah and showing the family)*

We call this the *afikomen*, a Greek word. Jewish tradition has it that *afikomen* means dessert, but some scholars believe it comes from a root word which means “I have come.” Jesus called himself the bread of life. As it is written:

Reader 1

“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry.’”

Reader 2

“‘I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.’”

Reader 3

“‘Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.’”

Reader 4

“‘Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.’” (John 7:35a, 51, 54, 58b)

Leader

The matzah is a picture for us of Jesus and what he did for us. Look at how the matzah is striped. As it is written:

Family

“But he 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 53:5)

Leader

Look at how the matzah is pierced. As it is written:

Family

“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” (Zechariah 12:10b)

Leader

See how the matzah is unleavened. Leaven stands for sin. Just as this bread is without leaven, Jesus was without sin. As it is written:

Family

“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:9, 1 Peter 2:22)

Leader

The middle matzah from the Unity was broken, just as Jesus, the Messiah was broken with suffering and death. We wrapped it in a white cloth, just as Jesus’ body was wrapped in linen cloth for burial. Just as the *afikomen* was hidden, so Jesus’ body was hidden for a short time in the grave. Just as the *afikomen* was brought out of hiding, so Jesus arose from the grave.

Leader (*lifting the afikomen*)

Family

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Leader (*breaking the afikomen and distributing it to all*)

It was then that Jesus added, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19) Let us now eat matzah, remembering the broken body of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (*All eat.*)

The Cup of Redemption

Leader (*filling the cups*)

Now we fill our cups a third time. (*lifting the cup*) This is the cup of redemption. It stands for the blood of the Passover lamb. As it is written:

Reader 3

“I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.”

Leader

It was this cup, the cup of redemption, that Jesus took after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20) Just as the blood of the Passover lamb provided salvation for God's people in Egypt, so Jesus' blood provides eternal salvation to all who believe.

Family (*lifting their cups*)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Let us drink with thankful hearts, remembering the Messiah's sacrifice for us.

The Prophet Elijah

Leader (*lifting the extra cup from Elijah's place*)

This cup is for Elijah the Prophet. In Jewish tradition, one of the children opens the door to see if Elijah will come to the *seder*.

As it is written:

Family

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes." (Malachi 4:5)

Leader

We who believe in Jesus believe that Elijah has already come. Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as the Elijah who was to come, and it was John who said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) We set this place for Elijah to recognize that he has come in the person of John the Baptist.

The Cup of Praise

Leader (*filling the cups*)

Now we fill our cups for the fourth and final time. This is the cup of praise. We praise him especially because of his promise to us.

Reader 4

"I will take you as my people and I will be your God." (Exodus 6:7)

Leader (*lifting the cup*)

With the cup of praise, we give thanks to God in the words of a psalm, just as Jesus did with his disciples. After each phrase of

thanksgiving, the family will join in saying, “His love endures forever.”

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the God of gods.

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: to Him who alone does great wonders,

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: to Him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: and brought Israel out from among them

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: with a mighty hand and outstretched arm;

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: to the One who remembered us in our low estate

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: and freed us from our enemies,

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: and who gives food to every creature.

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the God of heaven.

Family: His love endures forever.

Leader

Lifting our cups, let us bless the name of the Lord together.

Family (*lifting their cups*)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. (*All drink*)

Leader

The prescribed order of the Passover service is now complete. May we remember throughout the year that our redemption is complete by the sacrifice of our Passover Lamb, Jesus the Christ.

Family

Next year in the New Jerusalem!