

Passover Haggadah



A Seder for Christians

The Passover Seder for Christians

The Story of Passover

Rae: Passover is the oldest and most important of Jewish religious festivals, commemorating God's deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. It is based on the rituals of ancient Israel preserved primarily in Exodus 12-14 in which Israelites celebrated their deliverance by God from slavery in Egypt. The term Passover refers to the tenth and final plague God brought upon the Egyptians to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go, the death of all the firstborn of Egypt. In obedience to God's instructions, those who believed placed the blood of a lamb on the door posts of their homes, so that God would "pass over" those homes. The festival actually celebrates the entire sequence of events that led to the Israelites' freedom from slavery. While thoroughly based in those historical events, the celebration encompasses much more as it becomes a vehicle to celebrate the very nature of God and God's gracious work in the world. The Passover meal is known as the **Seder**, which means "order," because the meal and service are done in a prescribed sequence. Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration and the Last Supper is believed to have been a Seder celebration.

Beginning of the Seder

Katie: Welcome to our Passover Seder. Let us ready our hearts to celebrate and tell the story of deliverance, freedom, and redemption. Tradition teaches us that we must all consider ourselves as slaves in Egypt, that we must all consider ourselves to have walked in darkness, so that we might celebrate the deliverance in the Exodus as our own deliverance. It is in that spirit of community that we enter this Passover celebration.

Video: O Lord Hear Our Prayer

III. Lighting the Passover Candles

Rae: May the lights we now kindle inspire us to use our strength which you so freely give us to help and not to hinder, to love and not to hate, to bless and not to curse, to serve and worship you, O God of freedom!

Ba-ruch a-tah A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam, a-sher kid-sha-nu b'-mitz-vo-tav v-tzi-va-nu l-had-lik near shel Pesach.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to light the Passover lights.



IV. The First Cup: The Cup of Sanctification and Freedom

Katie: Passover is about memory and fulfilled promises. But it is also about hope, the hope that comes from a God who has fulfilled promises. So, we celebrate redemption as memory, but we also celebrate redemption as hope. The God of the Exodus is still God, and so we know that what has been is also a promise of what will be.

Our story tells us that in various ways, with different words, God gave promises of freedom to God's people. With four cups from the fruit of the vine we celebrate, and we recall God's promises to Israel and to us.

Michael: I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians, I will deliver you from slavery, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, I will take you as my people and be your God. [Exodus 6:6-7]

Katie: In the four cups that we drink tonight we celebrate these four "I will" promises of God: Freedom, Deliverance, Redemption, and Thanksgiving for fulfilling God's promises that allows us to be God's people.

Katie: We take the first cup and proclaim the holiness of this day of freedom. Blessed is God who fulfills God's promises, who is ever faithful to the ones who trust in God. In every age oppressors rise against us to crush our spirits and bring us low. From the hands of all these tyrants and conquerors, from the power of anything that hinders us from being God's people, the Lord rescues and restores us. We praise you, O Lord, who makes holy your people.

Michael: I am the Lord, and I will free you from the yoke of the Egyptians.
[Exodus 6:6]

Katie: Let us drink the first cup.

V. The Washing: Preparation

Katie: We will now prepare for the meal by washing our hands, symbolizing the sacredness of this occasion, and the purity of heart and hands that we are called to exhibit as God's people.

VI. Karpas - The Green Vegetables (Parsley)

Rae: Passover is a Springtime festival, the season of rebirth, renewal, and new life. The days are filled with more light than darkness. The earth is becoming green with new life.

Rae: This vegetable, called Karpas, represents life, created and sustained by the Lord our God. We are filled with joy at the goodness of God in loving us and caring for us, and bringing into our lives all good things.

Men: Arise my love and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away.
[Song 2:10-13]

Women: My beloved is mine and I am his. As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among men. Under its shade I delighted to sit, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banquet house, and his intention toward me was love. [Song 2:3-4, 16]

People: Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. [Song 8:6-7]

Rich: And yet as good as God intended life to be, it is often mixed with tears. Tonight, we are not simply celebrating Springtime or love. We are celebrating the freedom and wonderful deliverance that God brought to us as slaves in Egypt. But we do not forget

that life in Egypt was hard and filled with pain and suffering and tears. Let us never forget that the struggle for freedom begins in suffering, and that life is sometimes immersed in tears.

People: Blessed are you O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

VII. The Breaking of Bread: The Matzah

Katie: Now I will break the middle Matzah in two. Later we will share it together as the Passover offering itself was shared in this service in Jerusalem. Among people everywhere, the sharing of bread forms a bond of fellowship and community.

For the sake of our deliverance, we will say together the ancient words that join us with our own people and the beggar in the street. For our redemption is bound up with the deliverance from bondage of all people everywhere. It is only the grace of our Lord God that sets us free!

People: This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry come and eat. All who are needy come and celebrate Passover with us. Now we celebrate it here. Next year, may we celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Now we are slaves. Next year may we be truly free.

Katie: We will now hide a portion of the Matzah which we will use as the Afikomen, the dessert of our meal. It is a symbol of the redemption for which we all long and which we know will come, but yet which we do not yet see.

VIII. The Story of Passover

Rich: The Torah tells us that our children will ask questions about who they are as God's people. The Lord has instructed us that we should tell them the story so that they might know the Lord. It is both a duty and a privilege to answer the four questions of the Passover and to recount the gracious acts of our God.

Daniel: Why is this night different than all other nights?

Why on all other nights do we eat bread with leaven, but on this night we eat only unleavened bread?

Why on all other nights do we eat of all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat bitter herbs?

Why on all other nights do we not dip herbs at all, but on this night we dip them twice?

Why on all other nights do we eat in the normal way, but on this night we eat with special ceremony?

Michael: We will now answer the four questions concerning Passover that you have asked.

Once we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord in His goodness and mercy brought us out of that land with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Had God not rescued us from the hand of the destroyer, surely we and our children would still be enslaved, deprived of freedom and human dignity.

Once we worshipped idols and were enslaved by our sins, but God in His goodness and mercy forgave our transgressions and called us to be His people.

Therefore, tonight is different than other nights because we have gathered to remember who we are, what God has done for us, and to tell to our children the story of God's grace and deliverance.

Praise be to God who is everywhere. Praise be to God who has brought us freedom and has delivered us from all that enslaves us!

Rich: God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would be a great people, a promise he renewed to each generation, to Isaac and Jacob. As time passed Jacob's children came to live in the land of Egypt where his son Joseph was advisor to Pharaoh. But years passed and another Pharaoh came to power who did not remember Joseph and did not know his God, so he enslaved the Israelites. He forced them to work hard making bricks of clay and straw with which to build his cities. As the people increased in numbers, he feared that they might rebel against him, so he ordered every newborn boy drowned. They knew only toil, suffering, and tears.

They cried out from their cruel oppression, hoping that God would remember the promises He had made to the fathers. And God heard their cry and remembered the covenant He had made with Abraham. Through a wise mother and sister, God saved the life of the boy Moses from the ruthless hands of Pharaoh. After he had grown up, God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, and promised Moses that He would be with him.

And yet when Moses asked Pharaoh to free the Israelites, he refused and increased their labor. So God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt so they might know that the Lord is God, and let the people go.

Katie: In a moment we will drink the second cup, the cup of deliverance, and we will celebrate in joy God's deliverance from slavery. A full cup is a symbol of joy. Yet our joy is diminished because the Egyptians, who are also God's children, suffered from Pharaoh's evil ways. Lives were sacrificed to bring about the release of God's people from the slavery of Egypt, and we do not rejoice at the death of any of God's children. As we recount the plagues, we will spill a drop of wine from our cups for each plague to recall the cost of sin, and the consequences of evil in our world.

Katie: Blood. Frogs. Lice. Swarms. Cattle Disease. Boils. Hail. Locusts. Darkness. Death of the First Born.

As innocent people suffered and died long ago because of the oppression of tyrants, so people today still suffer from evil in the world. Our newspapers are filled with accounts of ethnic cleansing and bombings. We cannot celebrate God's deliverance for ourselves without longing that all God's children experience freedom from their bondage. So, we will spill another drop from our cups to recall the cost of evil in our world today.

Michael: Pharaoh continued to refuse to let the people go until the last plague, the death of the firstborn of all of Egypt, convinced him to release the people. By following God's instructions and putting the blood of a lamb on the door posts of the houses, the Israelites were spared this plague as death "Passed Over" their houses.

Rich: This is the symbol of the Passover lamb that was killed so that our children might live. It reminds us not only of God's wonderful grace in providing for us life and not death, it also reminds us that we are called to obedience in response to God's gift

of life. The sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem were a reminder of that grace and that gift of life.

Rae: The egg is a symbol of mourning, and is to remind us that the Temple in Jerusalem, the place of sacrifices, is no longer standing, and so sacrifices are no longer offered. But since it has no beginning and no end, the egg is also a symbol of new life and hope, and reminds us that God's grace is not confined to sacrifices in a temple.

Even as the Israelites were leaving, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. Trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Sea of Reeds, the Israelites had nowhere to go. But God told Moses to lift his staff over the sea, and God parted the waters. They were able to pass through the midst of the sea . When the Egyptians tried to follow, the waters closed back over them. When the Israelites saw that they were free, Moses' sister Miriam led them in rejoicing and praising God.

People: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hears the cries of the oppressed, who brings freedom to the captive, and who creates for yourself a people.

Amazing Grace, verses 1-3

**Amazing Grace how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!**

**Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hash brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.**

Katie: Tonight we eat Unleavened Bread because our ancestors in Egypt had to leave in such haste that they could not wait for their bread to rise, and so had bake it while it was still flat.

Rae: You shall eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you came out of the land of Egypt with great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from Egypt [Deuteronomy 16:3].

Katie: Tonight we eat bitter herbs to remind us of how bitter our lives were as slaves in Egypt. As sweet as our lives are now, we must never forget the bitterness of our bondage.

Michael: The Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields. [Exodus 1:12-14]

Katie: Tonight we dip twice. We have already dipped the Karpas. We will also dip the Charoset to remind us of the sweetness that God can bring into the most bitter of our circumstances.

Rich: I am sorely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word! How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! [Psalm 119:107, 103]

Katie: Tonight we eat with special ceremony because in each generation, every person should feel as if he or she has actually been redeemed from Egypt. We tell the story because we are the redeemed of the Lord, and we can sing a new song of praise because of His grace. And yet it is not a new song, because it has been sung by countless people through the centuries as generation after generation have experienced the deliverance and redemption brought by our God.

Michael: Once we were slaves but now we are free!

Amazing Grace, verses 4-5

**My God has promised good to me,
whose Word my hope secures;
God will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.**

**When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.**



IX. The Second Cup: The Cup of Deliverance

Katie: With the second cup we celebrate the deliverance that God has brought to us. We are privileged to thank God, to praise Him, to reverence Him, and to rejoice in His grace. He has brought us forth from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from darkness to light, from slavery to redemption.

Rae: I am the Lord; I will deliver you from slavery [Exodus 6:6]. We praise you O Lord our God, who has freed your people.

Katie: We praise you O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the earth. Let us drink the Second Cup.

X. The Meal

Katie: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Let us all offer a blessing for the bread.

People: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with your word, and has commanded to eat unleavened bread.

Katie: With bitter herbs, let us remember how bitter our slavery was in the land of Egypt. As we eat, let us allow the bitter taste to bring tears of compassion for the pain that our fathers and mothers felt long ago. But let us also weep for those who are still enslaved and have not yet experienced the deliverance that our gracious God brings.

People: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with your word, and has commanded to eat bitter herbs.

Katie: As we are reminded of the bitterness of our slavery, so too are we reminded of the hope that we have in our Lord. We will now begin to make the Hillel sandwich by placing a small amount of Maror on a piece of Matzah.

The Charoset is a sweet mixture of apples, nuts and wine. It symbolizes the mixture of clay and straw that the Israelites used to make bricks for the cities of Pharaoh. But the apples of the mixture also remind us of something else. Apple trees set fruit before the tree has leaves, and then grow leaves to protect the fruit. Tradition tells us that in slavery in Egypt, the women of Israel gave birth to children under the trees of the orchard to try to avoid the decree of Pharaoh, with no assurance of their safety and future. That hope in a future from God sweetened the misery of their slavery. Often, life is a mixture of the bitter and the sweet, of sadness and joy. Let us now add the sweetness of the Charoset to the bitterness of the Maror.

In the days of the Jerusalem temple, Rabbi Hillel ate a sandwich of the Pesach, the Passover lamb, with bitter herbs and Matzah. Since the temple is no longer standing and the Passover lamb no longer offered, we cannot eat the lamb with our sandwich. So instead, we use the Charoset to take the place of the Pascal lamb to remind us of the hope we have in God, of the sweetness that He can bring into the most bitter of our circumstances.

We have broken bread together and have told the story of our deliverance. Let us now eat together in celebration of our freedom.



The Meal is Served.

XI. The Third Cup: The Cup of Redemption

Katie: We will now offer a blessing for the food.

We praise you O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who in kindness, goodness, and grace gives food to the world. Your love for us endures forever. We praise you, O Lord, who provides food for all life.

May the Holy One, who makes peace in the heavens, make peace for us and for all people. Amen.

Rae: This cup is for Elijah the Prophet. Elijah did not see death but was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. It has been the hope of God's people that Elijah would come at Passover, to announce the coming of the Messiah, the son of David. As the prophet Malachi said: "See, I will send you Elijah the prophet before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes." [Malachi 4:5]. This cup has traditionally been left untouched, awaiting the time when Elijah would appear to share the Passover.

We will now open the door to welcome Elijah to the Passover.



Daniel opens a door.

Katie: It is now time to reveal that which has been hidden. We will find the Afikomen so that we may conclude our meal. The Afikomen has traditionally symbolized hope for the future, a symbol of redemption, as God again acts in history to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor [Isaiah 61:1-2 quoted in Luke 4:18-19].

Michael: I am the Lord; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm [Exodus 6:6].

Rich: As we have found the afikomen that has been hidden, we celebrate the fact that our long hoped for Messiah has come, and brought us a new freedom from a very old slavery." Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,

and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." [John 8:31-34]

Rae: To the One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by God's grace and made us a kingdom, priests to Christ's God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. [Revelation 1:5-6]

Katie: We will now fill the third cup.

Michael: Jesus stood in the synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth and read from the Isaiah scroll that promised a new work of God in the world. When he had finished reading, he said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" [Luke 4:21]. We still live in the "today" of that fulfillment, and so we celebrate the coming of Jesus the Messiah, and the faithfulness of God in working throughout history to bring deliverance and freedom to his people.

Katie: Jesus said, Where two or three come together in my name, I am with them. On the night before he died, Jesus had a meal with his friends. While they were eating, he took bread, gave thanks to God, broke it and said, This is my body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me. After supper he took the cup and said, This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, do it in memory of me. We meet together as friends of Jesus, who has invited us to share this meal. We remember that the Faith has been passed on to us by those in every generation who dared to follow Jesus. We remember too that we belong to a world-wide family of faithful of every kind. Let us greet one another as sisters and brothers in God's family. May the peace of God be with you.

People: *And God's peace with you.*

Katie: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

When Jesus took bread and wine, he gave new meaning to commonplace things. In the same way God can use and transform the everyday lives of ordinary people. Let us offer ourselves and our gifts to be part of God's purposes for the world. Let us all take a piece of the unleavened bread.

This broken bread of redemption reminds us of the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ that was broken for us. Take and eat this, remembering that Jesus died for us, and in so doing accept the grace of God that brings freedom from bondage to sin.

Katie: This cup reminds us that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed because he loved us so much.

Hymn: Let us Break Bread Together

**Let us break bread together on our knees.
Let us break bread together on our knees.**

**When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
My God, have mercy on me.**

**Let us drink the cup together on our knees.
Let us drink the cup together on our knees.**

**When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
My God, have mercy on me.**

**Let us praise God together on our knees.
Let us praise God together on our knees.**

**When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
My God, have mercy on me.**



XII. The Fourth Cup: The Cup of Thanksgiving and Hope

Katie: Our Seder is now complete, just as our redemption is complete. We rejoice with thanksgiving, and yet are humbled by God's love!

Rich: I am the Lord; I will take you as my people and I will be your God. [Exodus 6:7].

Yet the story of God's redemption is not ended. We celebrate what God has done in our history, and what he has done for us, but at the same time we still await a new future. All creation still groans and longs for its final redemption. As Jesus left, he promised he would come again and restore all things. We have faith enough to believe that God will not leave the world the way it is, so we await the day in which He will again come and bring His Kingdom in fullness.

Katie: We raise our glasses a fourth time in Thanksgiving for God's enduring grace and love to us. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has adopted us as your children, and allowed us to call you Father.

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen**

Katie: We drink the fourth cup and give thanks!

Rae: The traditional conclusion of the Seder is a hope for the future expressed by Jews throughout history: "Next year in Jerusalem." We will conclude our Seder with the same expression of hope and faith in God, as we await the coming of a new Jerusalem.

People: Next year in the New Jerusalem!



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