



A Publication of CJF Ministries and Messianic Perspectives Radio Network

Messianic Perspectives®

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.



FREE AT LAST

PASSOVER 2011/5771 by Dr. Gary Hedrick

The universal cry for freedom is a refrain that's been repeated—in one form or another—throughout the history of the human race.

The Jewish people are no exception. They have their own narrative about freedom. It's known as Passover, sometimes also called the Festival of Freedom.

This observance takes us back to the mid-15th century BC, when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. The Egyptians had become cruel taskmasters, and Pharaoh exploited the Hebrews ruthlessly as laborers on his massive building projects.

Finally, when they didn't know what else to do, the Jewish slaves cried out in desperation to God:

... Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them (Ex. 2:23-25).

God heard the cries of His people and He would send them a deliverer. But who would it be? If the choice had been ours and we were collecting résumés, here's how the classified ad might have read:

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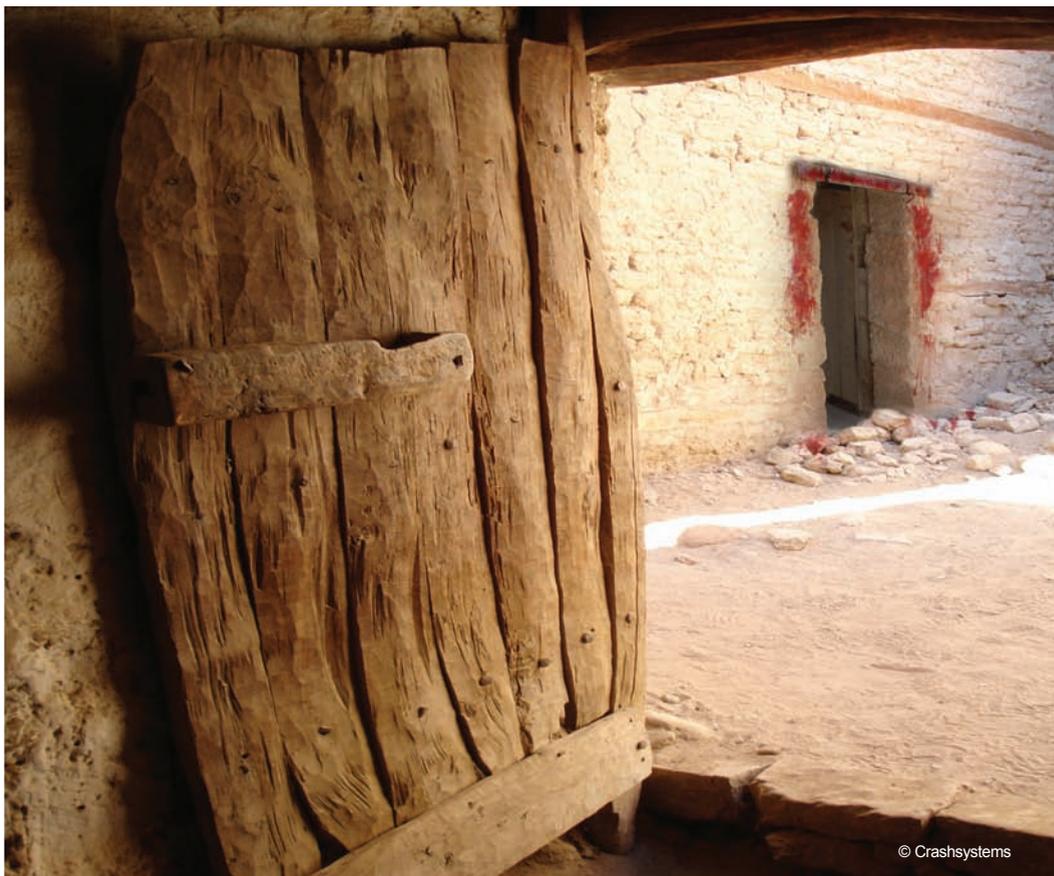
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Now let's look at the LORD's choice—Moses. He met almost none of the qualifications. He was (1) elderly (80 years old; Ex. 7:7), (2) a fugitive from justice (Ex. 2:11-15), and (3) not good with words (Ex. 4:10).

But this is how God often works. He chooses the least likely candidate. We tend to look at superficial characteristics; but He looks at the heart. He knows that inward character is more important than outward traits. Centuries later, that's why He would select David—the obscure shepherd boy—to be king over Israel (1 Sam. 16:1-13) instead of Saul—the tall, handsome, and famous war hero.

The First Passover

We all know the story. Moses' parents are Hebrews; but through a strange turn of events, he's adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and grows up in the royal court. When he's approximately 40 years old, Prince Moses kills an Egyptian official while defending a Hebrew slave. Once he realizes that he won't be able to conceal his crime, he flees across the rugged Sinai wilderness to Midian, where he goes into hiding for 40 years. Then God speaks to him from a burning bush and tells him to return to Egypt and lead His people to freedom.



Moses is quaking in his sandals—but he obeys. He returns to Egypt and confronts Pharaoh with a message from *Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: “Let My people go” (Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh knows that without all of the Israelites' free labor, the Egyptian economy could collapse—so he refuses.

The LORD decides to incentivize the stubborn king. He sends a series of 10 devastating plagues on the land

of Egypt. The last one is the death of the firstborn of every household—including Pharaoh's palace. Because the Israelites followed God's instructions and brushed the blood of lambs on the doorframes of their dwellings, the Destroyer “passed over” them (hence, the term “Passover”). Finally, cradling the limp, lifeless body of his own son in his arms, Pharaoh relents.

The children of Israel depart in haste from Egypt (something they had been warned to anticipate)—but their ordeal isn't over. Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues them. With the Egyptian army quickly descending on

The Four Ds of the Passover Narrative

It's an exciting and compelling story, to be sure. However, it's much more than just a story. It's also a teaching tool. Through the Passover narrative, God teaches us a great deal about Himself—and about ourselves.

1. The Danger of Complacency

The children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually did pretty well in Egypt—at least, for a time.

So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly (Gen. 47:27).

That, in fact, was the problem. Originally, the people of Israel had gone to Egypt to escape a famine. It should have been only a temporary move. After all, Canaan was the Promised Land—not Egypt.

But they prospered in Egypt. Because of their relationship to Joseph, the Israelites were a privileged group. It was a comfortable life. They even came to fancy the cuisine (Num. 11:5).

So they just never seemed to get around to going back to Canaan. Whenever the subject came up, I suppose they just said, “Maybe next year.”

It took a change of administration (and a new Pharaoh who didn't like them) to shake the Israelites out of their complacency.

Aren't we the same way? We get comfortable with our jobs, a house in the suburbs, and the ability to pay all our bills—and before too long, we start thinking we don't need God anymore.

Then a “famine” hits—like the Wall Street disaster that struck the United States in 2008—and we don't know what to do. We lose our jobs (and insurance benefits) and the banks foreclose on our homes. Hard-earned investments disappear into thin air. Unpaid bills start to pile up.

In desperation, like the ancient Israelites, we cry out to God for help. That's when He knows He has our attention.

Messianic Perspectives™

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Messianic Perspectives is published bimonthly by CJF Ministries, P.O. Box 345, San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345, a 501(c)3 Texas nonprofit corporation: Dr. Gary Hedrick, President; Brian Nowotny, Director of Communications; Rachel Zanardi, Editor; Erastos Leiloglou, Designer. Subscription price: \$10 per year. The publication of articles by other authors does not necessarily imply full agreement with all the views expressed therein. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Visit us online at www.cjfm.org. Toll-free OrderLine: (800) 926-5397.
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Very often, what we see as a tragedy or disaster is actually a wake-up call from the LORD. It's His way of getting our attention. That was true in the days of the Exodus and it's still true today.

2. The Delusion of a Secular Worldview

When the people cried out to God, I'm sure there were doubters among them who said, "So you think Abraham's God is going to help us? Good luck with that!"

It had been a little more than 400 years since their forefathers fled to Egypt to escape a horrible famine in Canaan (Gen. 47:1-27). Now, four centuries later, this was a generation who had never witnessed a miracle. They hadn't heard the voice of God. So they had no frame of reference for anything miraculous. For all intents and purposes, they were materialists with a secular worldview.

The same thing is happening today. Secularists and materialists have claimed the culture for themselves. To them, the physical universe is all there is. Everything evolved from primordial molecules and atoms as a result of natural forces. The secularists finally figured out that they don't have to prove God is a myth (like their forerunners, the "free-thinking" atheists, tried to do); all they have to demonstrate is that He is unnecessary.

I'd say they've done it pretty well because materialism has become a dominant worldview in our culture. It's taught (or worse, simply assumed to be true) in our academic institutions and it's reflected in the arts and media. So when secular (non-religious) people hear us talking about the miracles God did in the Bible, they think we're talking about magic and fairy tales. They have no frame of reference for anything else. A secular worldview comes as naturally to them as barking does to a dog.

This is why every believing parent's primary responsibility is to convey a biblical worldview to his or her children. Our children, and our children's children, need to know what God has done in the past—and what He will do in the future. Biblical accounts like the one in Exodus, where Moses recounts how God miraculously delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, provide that needed frame of reference.

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren (Deut. 4:9).

3. The Devastation of a Broken Spirit

One of the saddest verses in the Bible is Exodus 6:9: "*So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.*"

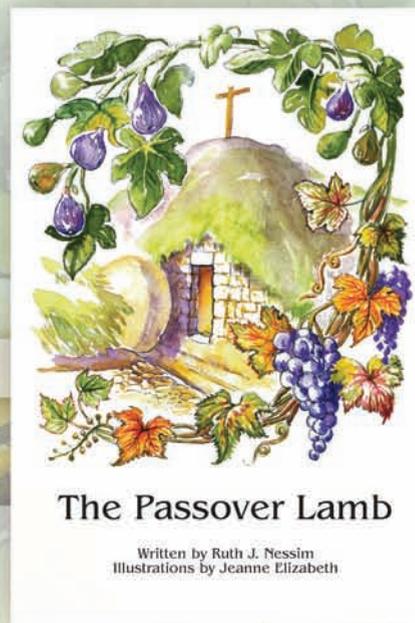
The term "anguish" in this verse translates a Hebrew word that means "to cut off," like stalks of grain are cut down by a farmer at harvest time. "Anguish of spirit," then, describes people who've been cut down or broken by their circumstances. It tells us that the Israelites had been beaten down for such a long time that they didn't care anymore. Their spirits were broken.

When Moses stood up and told the children of Israel that the LORD had heard their cries and they were about to experience His miraculous deliverance, most of us would have expected them to jump up and down with joy and anticipation! But the Bible says they didn't respond because of their brokenness.

The Passover Lamb

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Change of Plans

Technically, the biblical Passover (Heb., *Pesach*) started at sundown on Nisan 13 (when Nisan 14 began) and involved mostly preparations for Passover. It continued until the following sundown (when Nisan 15 began). The lamb was killed near the end of Passover (at twilight on Nisan 14; Exodus 12:6), just before the beginning of Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzot*). After that, Unleavened Bread continued for another seven days (until sundown on Nisan 21).

Sometime after the Babylonian Captivity, rabbinic Judaism adopted a system that altered the Passover calendar slightly. Instead of eight days (one day of Passover followed by seven days of Unleavened Bread), both observances are now blended into one seven-day observance known as “Passover.” It starts at the close of Nisan 14, at sundown, shortly after the lamb would have been killed on that first Passover recorded in the Torah.

Interestingly, the New Testament recognizes this change of plans. One of Yeshua’s biographers, Dr. Luke, says that in NT times, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was called “Passover”: “*Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover*” (Luke 22:1).

However, one of the paradoxes of the Christian life is that God is often closest to us when He seems farthest away: “*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit*” (Psalm 34:18).

That was certainly the case here. In these opening pages of Exodus, as bleak and hopeless as things appeared to be, the stage was being set for one of the greatest miracles—a whole series of miracles, really—in the history of the human race. A broken and demoralized nation was about to witness the salvation of the LORD. This leads us to the fourth “D.”

4. The Deliverance of God

We saw earlier that when the Israelites cried out to God, He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That covenant—the terms of which are scattered through several passages in Genesis (e.g., 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-8)—became the basis for His response.

What moved God here was not merely the fact that people were suffering; after all, multitudes of people are suffering all over the world at any given point in time—and He has compassion for all of them. But He generally allows events to run their course without His intervention because everyone suffers the consequences of living in a fallen and broken world. So why did He intervene for the children of Israel?

The children of Israel were set apart from everyone else because God had previously made them (through their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) specific promises. These were not promises ultimately for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the entire human race. He was going to use them to bless the world in more ways than anyone in the 15th century BC could have imagined. Yet here they were, under attack by a brutal king and demoralized to the point where many of them didn’t even want to live anymore—and with their continuance as a nation in question.

So when God heard their cries, He was moved to action because they were uniquely His covenant people. He had chosen them for a very special mission. That’s why He identified Himself to Moses as “the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 4:5).

God had promised Abraham three things: (1) a physical territory, (2) a seed (i.e., a son and descendants, including the ultimate Seed—the Messiah), and (3) blessings that would flow both *to* and *from* him.

The geographical aspect of this covenant was later amplified in the Land Covenant (Deut. 30:1-10); the seed aspect was expanded in the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-16); and the blessings aspect comes to fruition in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-36).

If Israel as a people (*Am Yisrael*) had been either destroyed by or assimilated into Egypt, the consequences would have been disastrous.

That's why the LORD rolled up His sleeves and went to work in Egypt on their behalf (cp. Isa. 52:10). The covenant had to be honored. The promises had to be kept so the mission wouldn't be jeopardized. Israel had to survive so she could be a light to the nations and so the Messiah could be born.

Passover and Salvation

Passover isn't solely about physical deliverance; it's also about spiritual deliverance. The story of the Exodus, in fact, can be seen as an allegory of salvation.

Looking at the Exodus through this grid, Egypt symbolizes the world. Everyone in the world (Egypt) is under the dominion of sin and the devil (Pharaoh). God calls His people (Israel) out of the world, and promises to deliver them if they trust Him. The blood of the Messiah (the lamb) is what makes that redemption possible.

When we follow the LORD by faith (like Israel did when she crossed the Red Sea), He protects us (as seen in the destruction of Pharaoh's army), leads us (the cloud by day and the pillar of fire at night), fellowships with us (the Tabernacle), instructs us (the Torah given at Mt. Sinai), provides for us (manna)—and our ultimate destination is Heaven (Canaan).

Nevertheless, even after we're saved (delivered), we sometimes hear the siren call of the world (Egypt). We might even wonder if we made a mistake by leaving the old life behind.



Keith Green, a Jewish believer whose musical career was cut short by a tragic airplane crash in 1982, made this temptation the theme of his song "So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt":

So you wanna go back to Egypt, where it's warm and secure.

Are you sorry you bought the one-way ticket when you thought you were sure?

You wanted to live in the Land of Promise, but now it's getting so hard.

Are you sorry you're out here in the desert, instead of your own backyard?

Eating leeks and onions by the Nile. Ooh what breath, but dining out in style.

Ooh, my life's on the skids, give me the pyramids.

Well there's nothing to do but travel, and we sure travel a lot.

'Cause it's hard to keep your feet from moving when the sand gets so hot.

And in the morning it's manna hotcakes.

We snack on manna all day.

And they sure had a winner last night for dinner, flaming manna soufflé.

(For more on his ministry visit www.keithgreen.com.)

Can you imagine dining from the same menu every day for 40 years? So it's true—sometimes we're tempted to return to "Egypt." But no one ever said this was going to be easy. At times, it takes every bit of strength we can summon just to put one foot in front of the other so we can keep on going.

Nonetheless, we persevere by God's grace, and continue trusting the One who called us. Over time, we build momentum. He blesses and empowers us; and we know eventually we'll come to the Promised Land.

Passover and Prophecy

It is no mere coincidence that Yeshua (Jesus) died during the Jewish Passover observance in (or around) AD 30 (Matt. 26:2).

God planned it that way because His Son fulfilled the symbolism of Passover.

The Apostle Paul said, "[Messiah], our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Yeshua was like the Passover lamb in several ways:

1. He needed to be flawless (Ex. 12:5; cp. John 18:38, Heb. 4:15);
2. He had to die (Ex. 12:21; cp. Rev. 5:6-12);
3. He didn't resist (Isa. 53:7; cp. Matt. 27:12-14);
4. He was a substitute (Ex. 12:3; cp. John 1:29);
5. His shed blood had (and still has) power to save (Ex. 12:21-27; cp. 1 Peter 1:18-19); and
6. He saves those who trust Him and apply His blood, symbolically and by faith, to the "doorframes" of their hearts (Ex. 12:22; cp. Heb. 11:28).

However, the analogy of the Passover lamb doesn't stop at Yeshua's first coming. It's also found in Second Coming contexts. In the Book of Revelation, for instance, the glorified Messiah is seen repeatedly and symbolically as a "Lamb" (Rev. 5:6, 8, 12-13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22-23, 27; 22:1, 3). The victorious Lamb metaphor anticipates the Messiah's triumphant Second Coming while also reminding us of His role (in His first coming) as a suffering Savior, who was mocked and ridiculed while going willingly to His death.





This Lamb in Revelation, however, is unlike any other lamb you'll ever see. He's not the quiet, submissive Lamb who's presented in the Gospels—or the ones that were hurriedly killed in Egypt. Here in Revelation, the slain Lamb has been resurrected (5:6-13), and no one is messing with Him now. They're not mocking or beating Him anymore because they've seen His power and they're scared out of their wits (6:16). He's no longer meek and submissive. Now He's a Warrior (17:14) and He has a throne (22:1).

The Lamb who was slain is now the Lamb who reigns forever:

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13).

The Passover Lamb has a dual identity because He is also our soon-coming Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5). A helpless, defenseless lamb and a dangerous, carnivorous lion—now that's quite a study in contrasts! It's not so much a mixing of metaphors as it is a blending of prophetic symbols—and it makes the point powerfully.

Passover and Freedom

Freedom has both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, we are freed *from* something; positively, we are freed *unto* (or *for*) something else.

For ancient Israel, Passover meant they were freed from slavery (and ultimate doom) in Egypt.

They were also freed to rekindle the relationship their forefathers had with *Yahweh* before they had deviated from His will by fleeing to Egypt 400 years earlier.

For believers today, Passover means we've been freed from the bondage of sin (and ultimate doom) by trusting in the shed blood of the Messiah.

It also frees us to enjoy a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.

What could be more fulfilling than getting to know the One who made you?

It's hard even to imagine such a thing; yet the Bible says it can happen (Phil. 3:8; John 3:16-17). The Bible says, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

This is why God's message for the world is known as "Good News":

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the
brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those
who are bound
(Isa. 61:1; cp. Luke 4:18).

If you'd like to know more about this Good News, please call, write, or email us today.

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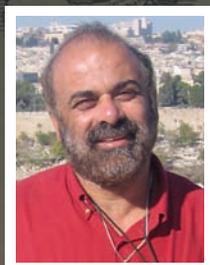


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Gideon Levytam is an Israeli believer in Yeshua (Jesus). He was born in Jerusalem on May 14, 1955, seven years to the day after the founding of the modern state of Israel. According to tradition, Gideon's ancestors were from the tribe of Levi and fled to Yemen when Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Gideon was in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and later came to faith in Yeshua as a result of his study of the *Berit HaChadashah* (Hebrew New Testament). He now lives in Canada and serves as CJFM's director of international ministries.

The Passover Seder:

Its Messianic Significance

by Violette Berger



Passover is the first of the major festivals mentioned in the Bible, and no celebration has a deeper significance for the Jewish people. With its roots deeply imbedded in Jewish history and religion, Passover is observed and celebrated by more Jewish people than any other holy feast of Israel.

The central theme of Passover is deliverance, and it represents a season of liberation and joy. The Passover rites were divinely ordained as a permanent reminder of God's deliverance and rescue of His Chosen People, "Israel my firstborn," from the Egyptian "house of bondage." Exodus 12:14 says, "*So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.*"

But the Passover celebration is also a clear prophecy of a greater story: the account of redemption through the Messiah, the Lamb of God—who lived, died, and rose again on the third day for the redemption of all who will receive Him. God's plan of redemption is dramatically seen in the beautiful pageantry and meaningful symbols of the Passover ceremony—called the "Seder," which means "order." The Seder indicates the order of historical events recalled in the Passover, as well as the meal itself.

The oldest male member of the family, "Papa," reads the account of Passover from a book called a *Haggadah*—a Hebrew word for "the telling." However, it is "Mama" who begins the Passover Seder by lighting the candles and reciting a *barucha* (prayer) at sunset. This is a reminder that it was also a woman, Mary, who gave birth to Jesus—the "Light of the world" (John 8:12).

Tragically, the Jewish people miss the foreshadowing of *Yeshua HaMashiach*, Jesus the Messiah, in almost every step of the Passover celebration. There is symbolism in each of the foods on the Seder plate, but two are especially significant elements: *baytzah* and *zeroah*.

The *baytzah*, roasted egg, symbolizes the daily sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. Jesus, however, was a once-for-all sacrifice (Heb. 10:12), hence the daily or yearly sacrifices are no longer necessary.

The *zeroah*, shankbone of a lamb, represents God's deliverance of the Israelites through the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, "nor shall you break one of its bones" (Ex. 12:46). Its fulfillment resides in the Lamb of God whom God sent for the expiation of sin—Yeshua (John 1:29). Like the Passover lamb of old, not a bone of His body was broken! Rabbi Paul states, "[Messiah], our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Another significant element on the Passover table is *matzah*, unleavened bread. Matzah is pierced and striped—just as Yeshua's body was pierced and striped (Isa. 53:5). Leaven (any product made from yeast) is called *chumetz*, and is a symbol for sin. Since matzah is unleavened, it is a symbol of sinlessness—just as Messiah Jesus was sinless. A piece of matzah is placed in each of the three compartments of the *matzah tosh*, a beautifully decorated cover representing the triunity of God. Papa reaches into the middle section, breaks the matzah in half, wraps one half (the *afikomen*) in a linen napkin and hides it. Following the Passover meal, the child who finds the *afikomen* receives a small reward. *Afikomen* is a Greek word translated as, "I am come" or "I came." Whoever receives this *Afikomen*, *Yeshua HaMashiach*, receives a much greater reward than *our* fathers could ever give us.

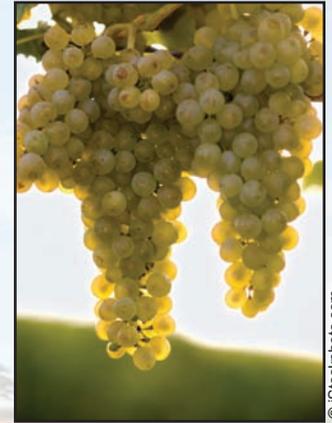
The entire Passover service can be gauged by four cups of the fruit of the vine. The four cups represent God's four "I wills," as recorded in Exodus 6:6-7. The first cup is the **Cup of Sanctification**, God's promise that He would bring His people out from under the cruel oppression of the Egyptians (cp. Luke 22:14-18). The second cup is called the **Cup of Plagues**, a review of the 10 plagues God inflicted on Egypt to deliver Israel. God will empower the two witnesses to use these plagues again (Rev. 11:3-6). The third cup is the **Cup of Redemption**, God's promise that He would redeem His people from slavery. It is through this cup at His Last (Passover) Supper that Jesus established the sacred rite of communion for believers (Matt. 26:28).

The fourth cup, the **Cup of Praise**, represents the fourth "I will" from Exodus 6:7, a reminder of the time when the Lord will gather Israel to Himself. To the believer in Messiah Jesus, it represents the hope of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-52).



by Violette Berger

Fruit from the Harvest



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“Seize the Moment”

For some time, **Michael Campo, CJFM Chicago-area director**, had been witnessing to a young man. The man eventually attended Mike’s Bible study, and the two began meeting regularly one-on-one. The man was extremely interested and open to learning more about Jesus, so Mike bought him his first Bible—which he diligently reads. During Bible studies, Mike explained the Gospel message, and they discussed sin, repentance, and faith.

Mike later asked the young man what was preventing him from repenting and following Jesus. He told Mike that he thought salvation was ritualistic and would occur sometime in the future. Mike realized the young man did not know, as the Apostle Paul stated, that *today* is the day of salvation. Mike writes, “So, rather than delaying, I immediately urged him to seize the moment. Praise God, he did just that!”

God Never Fails

Richard Hill, CJFM missionary (Las Vegas), and his wife Oanh met “Sadie,” an 82-year-old Jewish woman, through someone who attends *Beth Yeshua*—the congregation Rich pastors. Sadie was in dire need of help. She had hurt herself, was unable to walk—restricted to sitting and sleeping in the same lounge chair for two weeks—and without any medical help. Realizing that the health-care system had failed Sadie, Oanh immediately began advocating on her behalf.

Following numerous phone conversations, Oanh finally obtained a wheelchair for Sadie, some in-house help, and a social worker to assess her needs. Throughout this process, Oanh had opportunities to share the Good News with Sadie, who responded by joyfully praying with Oanh to receive Yeshua as her Lord and Savior. Although Sadie had fallen through the cracks in the health-care system without notice, God noticed—He never fails!

New Beginnings

Richard Hill was introduced to Yonathan, a young Israeli Jewish man who had lost everything in Las Vegas. Yonathan had sought help from a Christian program in town and, like Sadie, he received help for his situation—plus salvation!

Yonathan is being discipled, and the Lord has given him an intense desire to share Yeshua with his family and kinsmen when he returns to Israel.

And this is where Richard comes into the picture. He is now training Yonathan to share the Good News of Yeshua with the Jewish people. Richard says it is so exciting to see the growth and changes in Yonathan’s life as the Lord opens his eyes.

He asks us to pray for Yonathan’s continued growth, protection, and the Lord’s use of him to lead many to faith in Yeshua when he returns to the land of Israel—where it all began.

The Cost of Discipleship

CJFM worker Yossi, pastor of Kehilat Haderech (The Way)—a messianic congregation in Israel—writes that R, an Orthodox Jewish woman, has prayed with him to receive Yeshua. R is rejoicing and eager to learn as she more clearly understands how salvation has set her free. She attends one of Pastor Yossi’s home groups and Shabbat services (whenever possible) with her husband, who is not yet a believer.

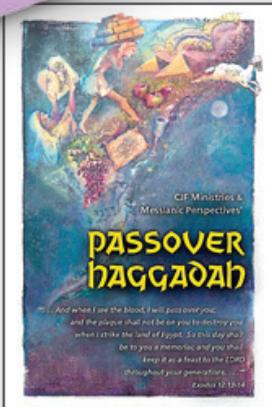
Pastor Yossi requests that we pray for R’s safety, as she lives in an ultra-Orthodox community, and she and her family would be met with strong and dangerous opposition if others were to discover her faith.

Dialogues with Peter

Michael B, a young Jewish man, meets with **CJFM missionary Peter Parkas (New Jersey)** and asks numerous questions about spiritual things. On one occasion, Peter stated, “The reality of God is testified through creation, itself. This is known as the argument for God’s existence by intelligent design. If God has intelligence then it makes perfect sense that He would communicate with us. The Bible claims to be God’s message to mankind.”

When Peter confronted Michael about his standing with God, Michael said, “We are all right. God and I have an understanding.” Peter quoted Romans 1:21 and said, “God asks those in a personal, conventional relationship with Him to give Him thanks. Many fail to do that.” As their dialogue continues, please pray for Michael’s openness to the Gospel.

Experience for yourself the stunning relevancy & blessing of the 3,500-year-old Passover Seder! For the most up-to-date list, visit cjfm.org/passover.



PASSOVER HAGGADAH
edited by
Barry Berger

It's not too early to start thinking about Passover, which will be celebrated in mid-April this year. CJFM's *Passover Haggadah* (a guide to the Passover Seder service), edited by Barry Berger, is a synthesis of his nearly 25 years of experience in leading Passover Seders. As Barry takes you through the Passover service from start to finish, he shows Messiah Jesus at every step in this significant observance.

As you celebrate Passover as a believer in Messiah Jesus, you will be reminded in a powerful way how Jewish our Messiah, our Bible, and even our faith, really are. (Also available in the Russian language.)

Book (#PH) 32 pages \$5
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Order by calling (800) 926-5397
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If you have questions, or need more information about scheduling a Passover presentation in your area, please call CJFM at **(800) 497-8766**.



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Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at garyh@cjfm.org, or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

(You may even see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.)

QUESTION: *The Bible says that Pharaoh wouldn't let the children of Israel go because God "hardened" his heart. If Pharaoh was being controlled by God like a puppet, how could he be held accountable for his actions?*

ANSWER: The interplay between Pharaoh and the LORD during the ramp-up to the Jewish exodus from Egypt reflects the tension between divine sovereignty and human free will.

Critics have suggested that Pharaoh can't be blamed for his actions in the Book of Exodus because God is the One who hardened his heart—and yes, they have Scripture to prove it! But wait a minute. Is it really that simple?

Here in the Book of Exodus, we have a monumental confrontation between the most powerful man on the planet (the king of Egypt) and *Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Pharaoh (who was revered as a deity by his people) was accustomed to getting his way; alas, his winning streak was about to come to an end.

Pharaoh and the LORD were at odds over the fate of the Hebrew people, who were slaves in Egypt. The LORD wanted them freed. The Egyptian economy had grown dependent on the massive amount of free labor that the slaves provided—so Pharaoh refused to let them go. Three times the Bible says the LORD hardened (or would harden) Pharaoh's heart. Seven times it simply says the king's heart was hard (or was hardened)—without saying why. Three more times it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

One other time it says God would send plagues "to Pharaoh's heart" (9:14), probably to reveal what lurked within the king's innermost being. After all, this is when we reveal who we really are—when we're under fire and the pressure is on.

Three different Hebrew words for hard/harden(ed) are found in this passage:

Chazaq—Means "to strengthen" or "to make firm." When the psalmist says we should "be of good courage" (Psalm 27:14), the word for "courage" is *chazaq*. In the Exodus story, the same word refers to Pharaoh. Therefore, a righteous man's heart is courageous for good; but an evil man's heart (like Pharaoh's) is courageous for evil. It's two contrasting reflections of the same attribute.

Qashah—Means "to harden" or to make something (or to be) "difficult." The psalmist uses this word when he says we shouldn't "harden" our hearts like Israel did in the wilderness (Psalm 95:8).

Kaved—Means "to become heavy" or "burdensome" (related to *kavod*, the Hebrew word for "glory"). Isaiah used this term

when he chastised Israel for being "a people laden (*kaved*) with iniquity" (Isa. 1:4).

Textual analysis (passages in Exodus mentioning the state of Pharaoh's heart):

4:21—God says He will **harden** Pharaoh's heart—*chazaq*

7:3—God says He will **harden** Pharaoh's heart—*qashah*

7:13—Pharaoh's heart grew **hard**—*chazaq*

7:14—God says Pharaoh's heart is **hard**—*kaved*

7:22—Pharaoh's heart grew **hard**—*chazaq*

7:23—Pharaoh's heart was not moved

8:15—Pharaoh **hardened** his heart—*kaved*

8:19—Pharaoh's heart grew **hard**—*chazaq*

8:32—Pharaoh **hardened** his heart—*kaved*

9:7—Pharaoh's heart became **hard**—*kaved*

9:12—The LORD **hardened** Pharaoh's heart—*chazaq*

9:14—God targets Pharaoh's heart with a series of plagues

9:34—Pharaoh **hardened** his heart yet again—*kaved*

9:35—Pharaoh's heart was **hard**—*chazaq*

The Pharaoh-*Yahweh* interchange boils down to one simple question: Who's in charge?

Having the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the LORD was in charge—and He ultimately prevailed. However, the Egyptian king's own free will also played a role in the shaping and severity of these events. Choices were placed before him, and he had to decide what he would do. Then he did it.

It's interesting that the narrative strikes a balance between the human and divine dynamics. Three times it says the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart. Three other times it says he hardened his own heart (and it uses *kaved* in each of these instances). The rest of the time, it just says his heart was hard (or hardened).

Nowhere does it say that God forced Pharaoh to do anything. It's more like the LORD was letting Pharaoh do what he was prone to do anyway—and prompting him at critical points along the way.

Nonetheless, let's not be too hard on Pharaoh. God's warning against stubborn, self-willed, hard-heartedness wasn't just for him—it's for all of us:

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: "**Do not harden your hearts**, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness" (Psalm 95:6-8; emphasis added).

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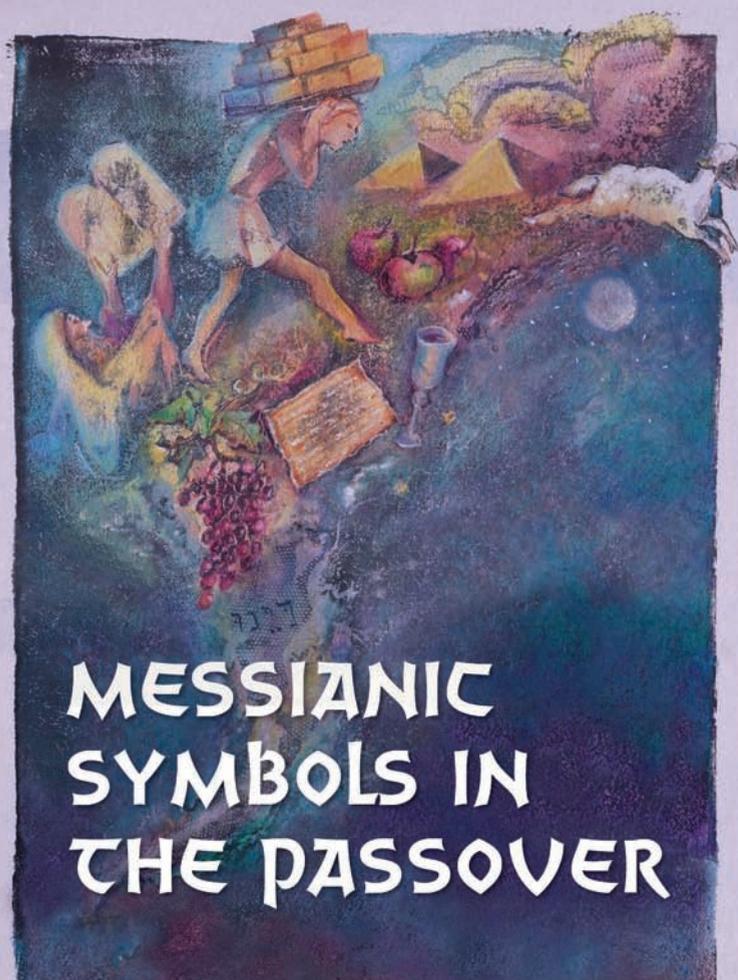
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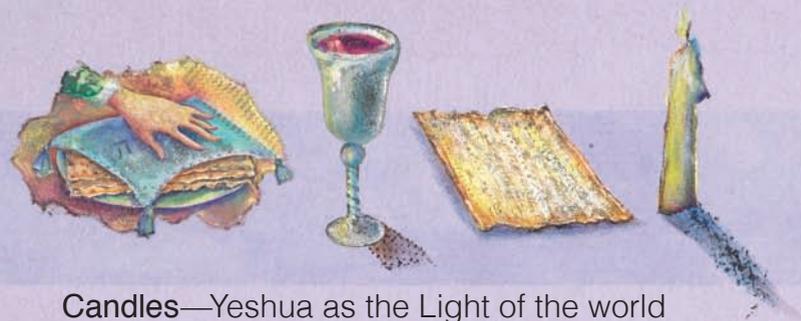
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MESSIANIC SYMBOLS IN THE PASSOVER



Candles—Yeshua as the Light of the world

Matzah (unleavened bread)—Yeshua's body (without sin)

Wine—Yeshua's blood (the third of four cups is the Cup of Redemption)

The Lamb (shankbone)—Yeshua the Messiah, the Lamb of God

Afikomen—the Son of God ("middle" or second Person of the Godhead)

Matzah Tosh—the Unity (*Echad*) of the triune Godhead (Deut. 6:4)

From CJF Ministries' *Passover Haggadah*