

## **CHURCH PREPARATION GUIDE FOR CHAIM PASSOVER SEDER**

### **The Philosophy of Our Seder**

Passover is the ancient Jewish feast celebrating the redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt. It is the central feast of redemption in the Old Testament. God demanded worship because He was the one who brought Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 5:6). The Sabbath was to be observed to commemorate this great redemptive event as well (Exodus 5:15).

As New Covenant believers, we recognize that the Messiah has come to bring the fulfillment of Passover. Jesus is the ultimate Passover lamb who causes the judgement of death to "pass over" us. He brings us freedom from the bondage of sin and leads us into *His* kingdom. The setting of the Lord's Supper is the Passover Seder. At that time Jesus proclaimed himself to be our Passover lamb, represented by the unleavened bread and the wine. He brought the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) and redemption through his sacrifice for sin and resurrection.

Let us affirm we need to approach the feast in a way honoring to God and His Messiah. Indeed, if we were to sacrifice a lamb as the ancient people of God did, we would be denying the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. But no one (apart from a handful of Samaritans in Israel) sacrifices a lamb today. Since there is no Temple, there can be no sacrifice. Our Passover Seder will emphasize that the final lamb has come in the person of Messiah. Let us also affirm we are in no way under obligation to practice the ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic Covenant administration.

Why celebrate the old feast when we have come into its fullness in the Messiah? Primarily because having a Seder has great educational and evangelistic value. It is very helpful for New Covenant believers to understand the connection between the first redemption and the last, between Passover and Easter, between the Passover Seder and the Lord's Supper. Indeed, Easter is referred to by a name which comes from Pesach, the Hebrew for Passover, in the Romance languages. We believe there is an organic unity between the covenants of God. There is in essence one Covenant of Grace administered in various ways throughout the history of redemption. God's purpose in all ages has been to redeem for Himself a people of blessing, those blessed through the Seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3), the Davidic King (Psalm 72:17), and ultimately, the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6ff, Isaiah 49:6, Galatians 3:10-14). We benefit greatly by understanding the continuity in God's purpose. All believers are Abraham's children (Romans 4:16). Whether Jew or Gentile, those who belong to Messiah should see themselves as sharing in the history of God's redemption of Israel.

We also do well to understand our Jewish friends and neighbors. Perhaps some will come to a New Covenant Seder. Paul wrote "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16). All New Covenant believers have a responsibility toward the Jewish people. We must bring the gospel to our Jewish friends as well as to the whole world. Understanding how our Jewish friends observe Passover is an essential part of sharing our faith with them. Nine out of ten Jewish people have a Seder. Furthermore, traditional elements of the Seder were already in existence in the time of Jesus, and we can see evidence of some of these traditional elements in that Upper Room Seder.

What about the regulative principle of worship? Aren't we to only worship according to what God commanded? Isn't it true that "what is not commanded is forbidden" when it comes to our worship? God has not commanded us to celebrate Passover as New Covenant believers. We have the Lord's Supper instead. This is true, but how many churches have special Christmas and Easter services? A Passover Seder recognizing Jesus as fulfillment is, arguably, *at least* as biblical as a Christmas or Easter service! (In fact, celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus as a fulfilled Passover is probably closer to what went on in

the first century!) If you are of the conviction that the regulative principle rules out any holidays other than Sunday, Christmas and Easter included, than you do have a case for ruling out a fulfilled Passover centered on Jesus, but even in that case it would only apply to the church's Sunday Sabbath worship and not a special educational service. Outside of the communal Sunday worship context, to a reasonable extent, whatever is not forbidden is allowed. That is to say, a special educational program giving instruction as to how the Jewish community celebrates Passover, how Jesus and the apostles celebrated Passover, and how these things all relate to both the ancient Passover and the Gospel, fits into even the most strictly constructed interpretation of the regulative principle.

Paul said "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the Law I became like one under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law), so as to win those under the Law" (1 Corinthians 9:20). **Needless to say, whenever a Mosaic practice or Jewish tradition is contrary to the gospel, it must either be "recycled" in conformity to Christ or simply left behind.**

### **About the CHAIM New Covenant Passover Haggadah**

The word "haggadah" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to tell". A Passover haggadah tells the wonderful ancient story of the exodus from Egypt. Many additions and embellishments from Jewish tradition and folklore are also added to the haggadah. Today we see a great variety of Passover haggadahs. Some make mention of the Holocaust; some are tailored to being back in the land of Israel; some have been designed for ecumenical gatherings; and some have been written for Messianic Jewish celebrations. The haggadah we'll use contains parts of the traditional Jewish haggadah, but also recognizes the connection between the Older and Newer Covenants. It is written in a way sensitive to the Westminster Standards. There are two options given within the haggadah in regards to communion, either to celebrate it or just to note the cultural context in which it was given.

### **Preparing for the Seder**

"Seder" means "order of service." The Passover Seder is conducted in the evening, which is the beginning of the first day of Passover. (In orthodox homes, a second Seder is held on the second day of the feast.) The Seder meal is a joyful, yet solemn feast occurring in the midst of a family religious service. The meal is eaten while leaning on a pillow. Ritual washings precede the meal. The head of the household conducts the Seder, and in religious families, wears a white garment called a "Kittel", which is symbolic of purity and the priestly role of the father.

We hope you are looking forward to having a complete Passover Seder! First we go through part of the service for about one hour, then we eat, then we have another half an hour. Allow at least 2½ hours. (And this is a rather short time for a Seder!)

For the sake of authenticity (not because we are bound by ceremonial law in any way) nothing with leaven (yeast) should be eaten. (Also no pork, ham or shellfish.) In other words, keep it (more or less) kosher! *There may be some Jewish friends in attendance, and we want them to feel comfortable.*

### **Suggested Main Menu** (More recipes can be found online.)

Matzah Ball Soup (Can be bought in jars, but this is expensive. Instant mixes are pretty good if you add a little carrot and celery to the batch. Beware! Do not make the matzah balls too big! They expand like dumplings when cooking!) If your church wishes to make things easier, the soup can be skipped.

Gefilte fish (store bought, serve with horseradish) and/or chopped liver. (Can also be omitted if desired)  
Chicken, brisket of beef, or roast turkey  
Candied carrots or sweet potatoes  
Green vegetables and/or salad  
Potatoes or "kugel"  
Macaroons or sponge cake  
Grape juice (Since you may not want to serve real Passover wine).  
Coffee and tea

**Ceremonial Foods for the Seder Plate (All necessary - one plate per table):**

Horseradish (red is not as hot!)  
Parsley  
Onion or piece of whole horse radish root  
Roasted egg (boiled is ok)  
Shank-bone of lamb or chicken leg bone (We can provide -- we save them!)  
Charoset (see recipe below)

**Matzah** (wrap three in a napkin and place on a separate plate)

**Accouterments for each table:**

A plate for the Seder plate (We have some we can bring if we do the Seder)  
Plate and cloth napkin for matzah  
Cup or small bowl of salt water  
Wine glasses  
A bowl with water and a wash cloth and towel  
A pillow

**Note:** Leave an empty place setting somewhere for "Elijah!"

**Recipe for Charoset (serves 10-20 people):**

2 apples  
1/2 cup walnuts  
1 tsp. honey  
1 tbsp. sweet red wine  
1/4 tsp. cinnamon

Core the apples (no need to peel).  
Chop the apples and the walnuts (can use a food processor). Mix in the rest of the ingredients. It should look like a coarse "mortar" mix! A little extra couldn't hurt. It makes a nice condiment to eat with meats!

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