



Wychwood Benefice

Passover Meal
Thinking about the Passover,
the Last Supper and Communion

Before we begin, some things to think about...

What are some of the links between Jesus and Passover?

Passover is celebrated by Jews all over the world. Traditions in various countries have evolved differently but all retain certain similar characteristics.

Why are we celebrating tonight?

Jesus' last meal with his disciples was a Passover meal, and it was within this context that he instituted the Lord's Supper.

Notice that there are various things on the table:

Parsley representing hyssop; to sprinkle the blood of the lamb.

Bitter herbs (lettuce and horseradish); the bitterness of slavery.

Salt water; tears of the slaves.

Roasted egg; persecution leading to endurance.

Shankbone of a lamb; the Passover lamb.

Matzoh (unleavened bread); no time to wait for bread to rise.

Haroset (cement like mixture); a reminder of slave labour, but also the sweetness of eventual freedom.

So, that's the food, what about the drink?

During the evening we will drink four cups of wine (or grape juice). These are to remind us of the promises made to the Israelites (Exodus 6:6-7):

1. Cup of Sanctification; 'I will bring you out.' (Kiddush)
2. Cup of Telling (the story of Deliverance); 'I will rescue you.' (Haggadah)
3. Cup of Redemption; 'I will redeem you.' (Ge'ulah)
4. Cup of Completion; 'I will take you as my people.' (Shallem)

What will happen?

Before the main course, there is much ritual during which we will eat these special foods in the traditional way. During the meal we will include many of the traditional Passover prayers. We will also include some New Testament passages which will make clear the link to the Last Supper.

The First Reading: Luke 22:14-16

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

Lighting of the Festival Candles

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to kindle the festival lights.

The First Cup

All glasses are filled but we do not drink yet.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Let us give thanks for this Passover feast which commemorates the departure from Egypt and the freedom of the children of Israel from slavery.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

All drink from the first cup.

The Second Reading: Exodus 3:1-10

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'

He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'

Ritual Dipping of the Parsley

Each person takes a piece of parsley and dips it in salt water.

As we take this parsley and dip it into the salted water let us remember the tears of the Hebrews in bondage; and also the suffering of Jesus on our behalf. Let us remember the hyssop that was dipped in the lambs blood for wiping on the door posts and lintels; and let us remember Jesus' blood shed for us. Let tears of repentance never be far from us.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the Earth.

Everyone eats the parsley.

The Third Reading: Exodus 6:67

Say therefore to the Israelites, I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians.

Breaking the middle piece of Matzah

Someone takes the middle piece and breaks it in two. One half is put back between the other two pieces, while the other half is wrapped in a napkin and placed to one side. This second half, called the Afikomen, is then hidden.

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt; let all those who are hungry enter and eat thereof and all who are in want come and celebrate the Passover. At present we celebrate it here, but next year we hope to celebrate it in the land of Israel. This year we are servants here, but next year we hope to be free in the land of Israel.

Telling the Story

All glasses are filled a second time, but we do not drink yet.

The children ask their questions. The most important is the question, "Why?"

The adults then recount the story of the Exodus, so passing on the story to the next generation.

Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we may eat leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night we only eat unleavened bread; on all other nights we may eat any kind of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs; on all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night twice; on all other nights we eat and drink either sitting or leaning, but on this night we all lean.

Why?

To remember that we were all slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and that if the Lord had not brought our fathers out, they and we and all our children would still be there in bondage.

The Fourth Reading: Exodus 12:1-14

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

Dayeinu [That would have been enough]

**If you had only saved us from Egypt,
that would have been enough for us.**

**If you had only given us the Sabbath,
that would have been enough for us.**

**If you had only given us the Torah,
that would have been enough for us.**

Song: King of Kings

King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Glory, hallelujah
Jesus, Prince of Peace, Glory hallelujah

Telling the Story

Our own hard hearts can separate us from God's rich blessings - though not from his love - if we refuse to submit to him in love and obedience. The Lord comes in judgement on people, as he did on Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

As we remember the ten plagues, for each plague mentioned we dip a finger into our wine and spill that drop of wine on our plates. Why? Because even the suffering of our enemies pains us. God himself is grieved at the wickedness of, and therefore the need for judgement on, those who oppose him.

These are the ten plagues which God brought on the Egyptians:

Blood; Frogs; Gnats; Flies; Pestilence; Boils; Hail; Locusts; Darkness; Slaying of the firstborn

The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the one who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.

Psalm 113:4-8

The Second Cup

For this cup it is traditional to lift your glass with your right hand and lean on your left elbow.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

All drink the second cup.

Ritual washing before food

It is traditional for the head of the household to wash the hands of family members by pouring water over their wrists and palms.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments and commanded us to wash hands.

The host washes everyones hands.

The Fifth Reading: John 13:1 & 13:4-5

It was just before the Passover feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

Many famous rabbis have highlighted different elements of the Passover as being most important. Rabbi Gamaliel is already familiar to us from Acts 5:34 -39, and also as the teacher of the Apostle Paul. Gamaliel stated that there were three things which are essential to mention at Passover. These are the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs and the Passover lamb. We find these things in the next part of the Passover:

A Blessing: for daily bread and unleavened bread

The host takes the matzoh and holds it high.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments and commanded us to eat unleavened bread.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Bitter Herbs

Everyone takes a piece of bitter herbs, horseradish and some haroset. They are not eaten yet.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments and commanded us to eat bitter herbs.

All eat the bitter herbs.

The Sandwich

A genuine Passover lamb was very expensive by New Testament times. Frequently, large groups would have other meat to make up the bulk of the meal, but would have one Passover lamb between them, such that each would have a minimum piece at least the size of an olive.

This was originally eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs as a kind of small 'sandwich'.

Thus did Hillel during the time the Holy Temple stood. He took the unleavened bread and bitter herbs and ate them together that he might perform what is said, "With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs shall they eat it."

Each person should take two pieces of matzoh and put bitter herbs between them to make a sandwich. All eat the sandwich.

The Meal

Let us eat together the eggs to begin our meal.

In this way we celebrate the feast of life. And then let us enjoy our meal.

The meal is now served.

Towards the end of the meal the children are asked to go and search for the piece of matzoh which was hidden (the Afikomen).

Grace after the Meal

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord our God.

Deuteronomy 8:10

Brothers and sisters, let us give a blessing.

Blessed be the name of the Lord for ever and ever.

The Third Cup

All glasses are filled but do not drink yet.

Please be silent at this point.

Traditionally this cup is known as the “cup of redemption”. Brothers and sisters, we move into this part of the Passover aware that at about this stage Jesus began to move into the deepest mystery of all. He must have shocked his disciples with his interpretation of this third cup and the afikomen. Let us move forward with him.

The Sixth Reading: I Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

The Seventh Reading

With hindsight the disciples might have understood what Jesus said as, “Up to this time, whenever you broke the bread it reminded you of the bread of affliction which your fathers ate in Egypt; but from now, when you break the bread let it remind you of the breaking of my body which is going to take place on the cross. Before, whenever you drank this cup, you thanked God for your redemption from the Egyptian bondage; from now, when you drink, thank God for your redemption from a greater bondage, the bondage of sin. Do this no more in remembrance of Egypt but in remembrance of me.”

Let us eat together from the matzoh which was hidden, the last piece of the meal to be eaten.

The host distributes and everyone eats a small piece of matzoh.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

All drink the third cup.

Psalms 117

Every nation, praise the Lord:	Alleluia!
And all peoples, praise his name:	Alleluia!
For his love towards us is strong:	Alleluia!
To his faithfulness, no end:	Alleluia!

Elijah Cup

The children search for Elijah and an extra cup is filled to overflowing for the prophet Elijah at the place has been set for him. The door is left ajar so that he can enter the room easily.

Why Elijah? The traditions say that the Messiah will come at Passover, since this is the most appropriate time, when Israel is celebrating the redemption the Passover and the Exodus. But why Elijah?

*Again, the traditions, based on Malachi 4:5-6 say that the Messiah will be preceded by the prophet Elijah, who will prepare Israel's heart to meet him.
Every family celebrating Passover hopes that Elijah will visit their home!*

The Fourth Cup

All glasses are filled but do not drink yet.

This is known as the cup of completion.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

All drink the fourth cup.

Hymn

Praise to the Holiest in the height, and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful, most sure in all his ways!

O loving wisdom of our God! When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood, which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe, should strive, and should prevail;

And that the highest gift of grace should flesh and blood refine:
God's presence and his very self, and essence all-divine.

O generous love! that he who smote in Man for man the foe,
the double agony in Man for man should undergo.

And in the garden secretly, and on the cross on high,
should teach his brethren, and inspire to suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height, and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful, most sure in all his ways!

The Eighth Reading: from Matthew 26 & Luke 22

Accomplished is the Passover Service according to its laws and statutes.
Let us end with words from Scripture:

When the disciples had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed to the Father, 'If it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me.' He said to his disciples, 'How is it that you were not able to keep watch with me for one hour? The hour has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinners.'

The Dismissal

Christ was obedient unto death. Go in Peace.