

Celebrating the Passover

AN INVITATION & GUIDE TO
CELEBRATING



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AN INVITATION TO CELEBRATE PASSOVER: READ, REFLECT & PREPARE

The Passover has been celebrated by Jewish people for thousands of years — ever since God instituted this celebration in Exodus 12. It began as the Israelites were living in Egypt as slaves to Pharaoh. They were told what they could and couldn't do. One of the things they were told they could not do was to worship God properly. This weighed heavily on the people's heart. God sent Moses, a redeemer, to speak on God's behalf to Pharaoh to ask that the people could be able to leave to go and worship God properly. What did Pharaoh say? If you have ever taught this story to kids, now would be the perfect time to yell (all together at the top of our lungs): "NO!" Pharaoh said no. God brought plagues down on Egypt to show Pharaoh that He is God and He is commanding that he let His people go worship. Pharaoh's prideful heart saw his own people suffering through famine, plagues of boils, locusts, crops and cattle dying, and yet still refused to let his slaves go. God sent the final plague - the angel of death - into the city to kill all the first born sons. God wanted to protect His people from this final and horribly disastrous plague and so He gave them instructions on how to prepare to leave and to keep their family safe. He told them to sacrifice a year old male lamb, to paint the blood on their doorposts, to roast the lamb in bitter herbs, to make bread without yeast, and to eat the food with their shoes on, staff in hand and ready to go as a sign of faith and anticipation for what was to come . . . their mass exodus from Egypt. God's instructions allowed the Israelites to celebrate the first Passover meal in faith before they witnessed God's protection. They prepared their celebration and celebrated together before they had something to celebrate. They celebrated their deliverance while still under the yoke of slavery in anticipation and faith for God to do what He said. And, like He has always done, God followed through with what He said, leading His people out of Egypt and eventually into a land that He had promised for them.

Each year afterwards (besides a few disobedient ones!) the Israelites would celebrate Passover and they would remember how God used Moses to lead them out of Egypt into freedom. And, each time as they gathered with their families and community to celebrate, they prepared their tables as God had commanded, all while God prepared their hearts for the great and wonderful redemptive plan of Jesus. The Exodus foreshadows an even greater deliverance: the ultimate deliverance of our souls through the death of Christ on the cross.

Why should we celebrate Passover now adays? I mean, it's not really a matter of whether or not we should but whether or not we want to take any opportunity we can to celebrate Jesus and remind ourselves of us faithfulness — now and forevermore.

JUSTINE DUECK

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Collect and ready the following items. They will be used in your celebration of Passover!

PASSOVER CELEBRATION

TABLE SET UP

Tears are salty. This reminds us of the Israelites slavery & hardship in Egypt and that we were once slaves to sin.

The egg is a circle which reminds us of God's unending love for us.

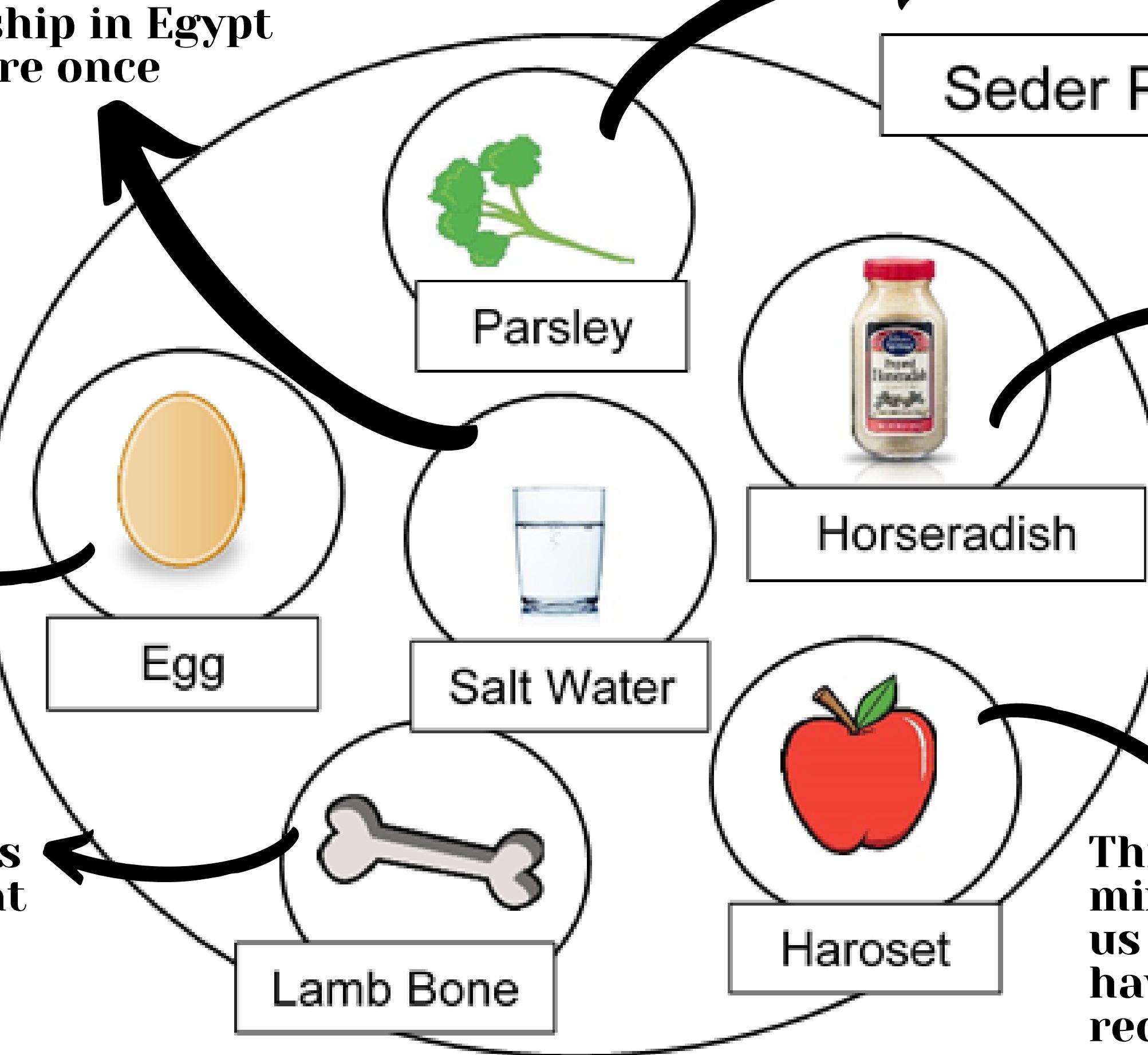
This reminds us of the lamb that was sacrificed.

This greenery reminds us of the new life we have in Christ.

Seder Plate

This reminds us of the bitter life we had before we came to trust Jesus.

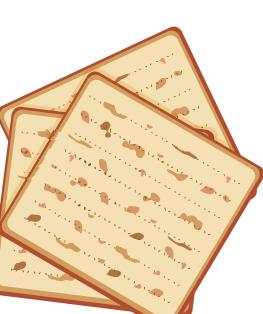
This is a sweet apple mixture. It reminds us of the hope we have. Look up a recipe online!



Since Passover is originally a Jewish celebration, we will light the candle to remind us of Jesus - the light of the World and the reason we have to celebrate.



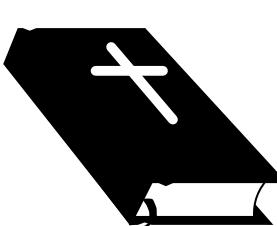
Have a glass of wine (or grape juice) ready to take communion . . . and to enjoy with your meal!



This is Matzah (unleavened bread). You can buy at the store, make a recipe online, or use crackers!



We will use a bowl of water and a towel to wash our hands as we read about the New Covenant Passover.



We will be reading a ton of Scripture together. Ask everyone you are celebrating with to bring their Bible along to participate in reading God's Word.

BEFORE STARTING

EAT DINNER. WHETHER YOU'VE MADE SOMETHING SPECIAL AND FANCY TO EAT OR NOT, EAT BEFORE YOU START GOING THROUGH THE PASSOVER GUIDE! I'VE MADE THE MISTAKE IN PREVIOUS YEARS OF, ONCE THE FOOD IS READY, TO PAUSE TO DO THE REFLECTION GUIDE. THE FOOD WILL GET COLD! INSTEAD, USE IT AS AN AFTER MEAL, BEFORE DESSERT KIND OF ACTIVITY. DO AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE AS YOU'D LIKE. IT'S YOUR CELEBRATION AFTER ALL!

• HAPPY CELEBRATING! •

Passover Celebration Reflection Guide

Introduction & candle lighting

Read: Throughout the Bible, God's promises point towards the coming Messiah – the Savior. The Old Testament is filled with story after story of God sending many savior archetypes to deliver His people from difficulties: Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Jeremiah, Samuel, Esther and David (to name a few). God used these imperfect saviors to lead His people out of slavery, to win wars against oppressors and to guide them in claiming His promises. But, these saviors could not save them from the worst chains of all – their sins and their disobedience towards God. There is only one who is worthy and capable to bring about such wonderful and whole healing for the world . . . only one true and perfect savior . . . and that is God Himself.

Action: Light the candle and read John 1:1-18
Pray and thank God for sending Jesus to save.



God meets you in your difficulties

Read: Thousands of years ago God created the world and named a people for Himself called the Israelites. His people grew and were blessed, just like He promised. They had been living in the land of Egypt, and soon, there were more Israelites than Egyptians. The Egyptians got worried. The growing number of Israelites intimidated them and so they decided they were going to take back their land and oppress God's people. They put the Israelites into slavery, making them work hard to build the Egyptian empire. God's people were sad and felt like they had no hope. But God sent a man named Moses to save His people from Egypt and help them escape to a beautiful land of freedom that God promised them. This beautiful land would be a place where God's people could worship Him freely and have everything they needed. Every year, God's people remember how God saved them and took them to the beautiful Promised Land. They remember and celebrate God's love for them by having a meal called Passover.

Action: Read Exodus 5:1-22

Seder Symbolism: The Israelites were slaves in Egypt – let's remember that their lives were bitter and hard by scooping some maror (horseradish) onto a piece of matzah (unleavened bread) and eating it.

Seder Symbolism: Now, dip the parsley in the salt water (everyone takes a bite!). Passover is a holiday that comes in the springtime when the earth is becoming green and everything is coming back to life. This parsley will remind us of life, given and sustained by God. But, life in Egypt for the children of Israel was a life of pain, suffering and tears. This salt water can remind us of that because tears are salty.

Reflection: The Israelites were having a difficult time in Egypt, but God heard their cries for help. Take some time to write down some of the hardships that you might be facing right now. Give those over to Jesus. Have someone read 1 Peter 5:6-7 and then pray, thanking Jesus for the ways He sees us and cares about our situations.

Trust that God has a plan

Read: Things felt hopeless for the Israelites in Egypt. But God has proven time and time again that He is in control, that He is on their side and that He has a plan. Throughout Scripture God reminds His people of all that He did to deliver them in Egypt. When they doubt, He often says “remember what I did for your ancestors in the land of Egypt?” Sometimes we have to hold onto our own “Egypt Deliverance” moments. When life gets difficult it’s too easy to forget about how God has come through in the past. When we forget how He came through for us in the past, it’s hard to trust Him in the present. Celebrating the Passover was one of the ways that the Israelites reminded themselves in the present of something awesome God had done for them in the past. As we celebrate Passover, we can choose to remember and reflect on God’s faithfulness as well.

Action: Read Exodus 6:1-8

Seder Symbolism: Spread some of the sweet apple mixture (Haroset) on the matzah to eat. The sweet haroset reminds us that God always has a plan. There is hope even in the most hopeless and bitter circumstances.

Reflection:

1. Have someone read Romans 8:38.
2. Play the song: “Raise a Hallelujah” by Bethel Music. Spend time reflecting & worshipping to this song.
3. Everyone take an opportunity to share a time when you trusted God to come through for you and He did.



Remembering the Original Passover

The plan of salvation

Read: God's deliverance of His people in Egypt foreshadowed the ultimate plan of salvation for the world from the worst bondage and the hardest oppressor. A plan that made a way to freedom and relationship with God – should we choose to accept it. The lamb whose blood marked the doorposts of the Israelite homes offered protection so that the angel of death would 'pass over' their homes. This reminds us of Christ's protection over us. When we accept Jesus into our hearts and claim Him as Lord of our lives, His blood which was spilled through His death on the cross, covers us; the power of (spiritual) death passes over us as well. God saves!

Action: Read Exodus 12:1-14:4

Seder Symbolism: The roasted lamb bone represents the lamb whose blood marked the houses of the children of Israel, signifying their obedience to God's command. They painted the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and the Lord knew that they were His people and He saved them. The lamb bone also reminds us of Jesus, the lamb of God, and His sacrifice. When we accept Jesus His blood saves us too!

Action: Read John 3:16-17

Seder Symbolism: The egg reminds us of the new birth and new life that we have in Jesus! The shape of the egg shows no beginning and no end – just like God's love for us. The whole reason that there was any plan to save the world in the first place was because of God's never ending, all consuming, perfect love for us.

Communion

Read: If you weren't already convinced that the Passover in Exodus points to the New Testament Exodus of God's people, then this similarity will drive this point home. Jesus and His friends were celebrating this very Old Testament Passover instituted by God for their "Last Supper". It was on the very night of Passover, as the Jews all gathered to remind themselves of God's faithfulness and celebrate all that God had done for their ancestors in Egypt, that Jesus was betrayed and led like a lamb to the slaughter. Was this just a coincidence? No! It was a promise made by God at the beginning of time being completely and totally fulfilled.

COMMUNION

Action: Read Luke 22:1-23 (take communion)

1. Matzah (bread): This is the bread that the Israelites were asked to make before they fled Egypt on the night the first born of the Egyptians died. It is different from most bread because it is flat. They didn't have time to let it rise because they needed to escape. Jesus broke the bread and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Luke 22:19. Eat the bread in remembrance of Jesus.
2. Cup (wine): Make a toast to Jesus. Pray and thank Him for coming to save. Partake in the communion cup.

Living the life of Christ

Read: Jesus came to earth to save us and to conquer our enemies, but He also came to show us how to live. One of the final messages that Jesus wanted to leave His disciples with was "love one another just as I have loved you." He said that that's how others will know that we are His disciples . . . if we love one another. Loving means serving. Loving means putting others above ourselves. Loving means being selfless, patient and kind. And, loving means sharing the Good News of God's love with those we encounter.

Action: Read John 13:1-17

Each person will wash their hands with the bowl at the table. Everyone is to name a person in their lives that doesn't know Jesus – someone that they can share this message of God's love and salvation with. Then everyone will take some time to pray for those people they listed.

Benediction

Call and response:

Leader: Give thanks to God, for He is good,

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of lords,

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who alone has done great wonders

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who made the heavens

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who spread out the earth on the water

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who made the great lights, the sun to rule the day
the moon and stars to rule the night

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who struck down Egypt's firstborn, and brought
Israel out from among them, with a mighty hand and an
outstretched arm

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who split the Red Sea and made Israel cross right
through it but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: to him who led his people through the desert,

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Leader: Give thanks to the God of heaven.

ALL: for his grace continues forever

Psalm 136:1-16, 26

Thank you!

I am so glad that you chose to make celebrating Passover a part of your Holy Week reflections and festivities this year! If you enjoyed this guide, feel free to share it with others. Note that this is not a comprehensive guide or a complete, traditional 'how to' celebrate Passover. Rather it is a combination of how Justine and her family celebrate along with excerpts and guidance from the book *The Messianic Passover Haggadah* by Barry & Steffi Rubin.