

The Liturgy of the Passover

Host Welcome to our Passover Supper.

This night we celebrate the exodus and new exodus, God's redemptive liberation of his children from slavery and sin and death.

Passover starts with the lighting of two candles accompanied by a blessing. It is traditionally done by the mother of the house. To make ourselves ready, let us keep silence to receive the Passover celebration in peace and quietness.

As the candles are lit

Leader Blessed are you, Lord of all nations, who has sanctified us by the blood of the Lamb, made us children of Abraham, and called us to be the light of the world.

I pray that the brightness of these lights may inspire us and bring spiritual joy and promise to all of us.

All **Amen.**

Blessed are you, Lord of all nations, who has brought us from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, and led us to the Promised Land.

The Passover Meal

Host This night is different from all other nights, for on this night we celebrate the going forth of Israel from slavery into freedom and redemption, from a time of hardship to a time of blessing.

Tonight we celebrate the Passover, the feast of freedom and redemption, and we read from our story; our history: enslavement in Egypt, freedom, the holy commitment at Mt Sinai, and the return to the Promised Land.

Reader Why do we eat unleavened bread tonight?

Leader It is a reminder of the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt. The scripture says:

Exodus 12.39

Reader "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves."

Host Here is the shank bone of a lamb.

Reader What is the significance of the shank bone?

Leader Traditionally, the shank bone of a lamb is used as a reminder of the lamb offered on Passover at the Temple in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. It also recalls that God passed over the houses of the Hebrew people in Egypt; their homes were marked with the blood of a lamb:

Exodus 12.26-27

Reader "And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'"

Host Here is an egg.

Reader What is the significance of the egg?

Leader The egg is a reminder of the roasted egg offered at the Temple of Jerusalem at the Passover Festival.

Host Here is horseradish, or "bitter herbs".

Reader What is the significance of the "bitter herbs"?

Leader The "bitter herbs" remind us of hardship of the life of Israel in Egypt that was made bitter by their oppressors. The scripture explains:

Exodus 1.13-14

Reader "So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves."

Host Here is a mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine.

Reader What is its significance?

Leader It is a reminder of the mortar used by the forced Hebrew laborers in Egypt.

Host Here is a sprig of parsley, a "green herb".

Reader What is the significance of the "green herb"?

Leader The sprig of parsley is a reminder of springtime, the season of Passover. We use it as a sign of gratitude to God for the goodness of the earth, for our bread and food.

Host There are additional symbols of the Passover Supper that we can see on the table. One of them is salt.

Reader What is the significance of salt?

Leader It symbolizes the harshness that Israel endured in its experience of slavery. It will be used to dip the “green herb”.

Reader How many cups of wine are we to drink in the Passover Supper?

Leader Four cups of wine. This requirement is based on the biblical account of Exodus outlining the four stages by which Israel was delivered from slavery:

Exodus 6.6-7

Reader “Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’”

Leader The wine is red, recalling the color of the lamb’s blood that the Israelites sprinkled on the doorposts of their homes so that their firstborn sons could be “passed over” as the angel of death took the firstborn of Egypt.

First Cup of Wine: The Cup of Sanctification

The first cup of wine is filled and lifted up.

All Blessed are you, Lord God, who has chosen us from among every nation of this world and sanctified us by the blood of the Lamb. With an everlasting love you have given us holidays and seasons for rejoicing, and this day of the Feast of Matzot, the time of our freedom, in remembrance of Israel’s going out from Egypt.

Blessed are you, Lord God, who sanctifies the children of Abraham and their feasts.

All drink the first cup

Eating a Green Herb

Everyone dips the sprig of parsley into the salt, and consumes it.

All Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the earth.

The Story of Oppression and Liberation

Leader Blessed be God who keeps promises to the children of Abraham and fulfills them in every age. *Leader* The Book, Deuteronomy says:

Deuteronomy 26.5-6

Reader “And you shall make response before the Lord your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor.’”

Leader The Book, Exodus confirms the story. It tells us that after Joseph died a new Pharaoh arose who forgot what Joseph and his people had meant for Egypt. This Pharaoh enslaved all Israel and condemned all newborn males to death. A child, a descendant of Levi, was saved by Pharaoh’s daughter and reared in the palace. Later in life he realized that he was a child of Israel and escaped to the desert. There at Mt Horeb God was revealed in the burning bush:

Exodus 3.6-10

Reader “And he said, “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 surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of 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 place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Leader Moses pleaded with Pharaoh, who stubbornly refused to free the Hebrew slaves. God afflicted him with ten plagues that left Pharaoh’s people and their land desolate.

Second Cup of Wine: The Cup of Proclamation

The second cup of wine is filled and lifted up.

Leader It is not only our ancestors who were redeemed by God from slavery, but we in every generation are duty-bound to regard ourselves as those who have also gone forth from Egypt. God brought us forth from slavery to freedom, anguish to joy, mourning to festival, darkness to great light, subjugation to redemption. For this reason, we raise the cup of proclamation, the proclamation of our salvation.

All Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

All drink the second cup

Eating of the Bitter Herb

Everyone takes a fragment of unleavened bread and dips it into the horseradish.

All Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, who made us holy with commandments and commanded us to eat of bitter herbs.

The supper is served. Save a portion of unleavened bread and wine for the conclusion of the meal. When Jesus celebrated his last Passover Meal with his disciples, he radically changed its meaning by identifying the bread as his body which was to be the sacrifice of the new covenant and the wine as his blood which was to be poured out rather than the blood of the sacrificial lambs. After the meal he raised the third cup of the Passover meal, the cup of Thanksgiving, and said these words:

The Gospel

Luke 22:14–20

Reader “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; or I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Consume the final portion of unleavened bread.

The third cup of wine is filled and lifted up.

Leader With the third cup after supper, Jesus said: “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Drink the third cup.

All As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory, make us one in Christ, our risen Lord.

Final Blessings

Leader Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, you bring forth bread from the earth.

All Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, you create the fruit of the vine.

All Blessed be God for ever.

It is right to praise you, Father, Lord of all creation; in your love you made us for yourself. When we turned away you did not reject us, but came to meet us in your Son.

All You embraced us as your children and welcomed us to sit and eat with you.

In Christ you shared our life that we might live in him and he in us.

All He opened his arms of love upon the cross and made for all the perfect sacrifice for sin. His body is the bread of life. Until the kingdom of God comes let us celebrate this feast.

The Lord’s Prayer

Leader And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Dismissal

Reader Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. There he 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 sinful men. Come, let us go.’

Christ was obedient unto death. Go in his peace.

