



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 4-8-23 PESACH

Ministry News

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE ON THE LIST TO PRAY FOR YOU CAN SEND THEM TO US AT TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG OR BY TEXT MESSAGE TO 575 644-7706 AND I WILL SEND THEM BY EMAIL ONLY.

Remember that you can support the work of Tree of Life Messianic Ministries with a donation made via PayPal or by check to PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052. Your donation helps our continued outreach to inmates and the time it takes to put this Newsletter together.

Donate



Tree of Life Messianic Ministries is an approved Giving Charity by PayPal. To donate go to etz-chayim.org and click on the PayPal Link.

Tree of Life Messianic Ministries primarily focuses on its Prison Ministry and helping form groups in the prisons. TOLMM also seeks to help Home Groups and offers a covering for Home Groups and the combined experience of leadership from Rabbi Philip Hammond and Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Group leaders can receive recognition as Elders under TOLMM, which will help in an advisory role.

Your support is needed for the Prison Ministry due to continuing rising costs.
We now have an Affiliate in Australia.

HOME GROUPS, CONGREGATIONS AND PEOPLE SEEKING FELLOWSHIP...

Shawn Warren lives in Arizona. If you know of someone who is looking for a group in that area, please let me know and I will send the information to Shawn. Elder Shawn Warren is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM and helps with one-on-one correspondence with inmates in our Prison Ministry Outreach. He also encourages people to contact us about affiliating with TOLMM through Home Groups and our help to group leaders.

Marcia Hedrick would like to host a group on the west side of El Paso in her home. She also needs someone to lead the group while she will be the host. If you are interested let me know and I will send her the information.

Gabriel Martinez has a home group in El Paso (different area). If interested let me know and I will send him the information. Gabriel is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM as is his Home Group, Ohr Ha'Brit Messianic Assembly.

There is a new Home Group in Las Cruces. For more information email tolmm@etz-chayim.org.

Michael and Gayle Michelucci are forming a new Home Group in Idaho.

Rabbi Phillip Hammond has a Zoom Bible Study and a Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Service on Zoom Friday evening and Saturday morning at 11:00am. Rabbi Hammond is in Australia and the time difference would be 5:00pm Friday Mountain Time. Rabbi Hammond is looking into starting a men's group focused in the United States. You can contact Rabbi Hammond at Philip@etz-chayim.org. Rabbi Hammond is now affiliated with Rabbi Mordecai Silver and his ministry, Tree of Life Messianic Ministries. Check out Rabbi Hammond at <https://www.etz-chayim.org/australia-affiliate/>.

We thank you for your support. Blessings in Messiah Yeshua,
Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph. D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D. and our team

General News

TO SEARCH FOR MY BOOKS ON AMAZON ENTER “**BOOKS BY RAV MORDECAI SILVER**”. MINE ARE AVAILABLE IN PRINT FORMAT ONLY. I HAVE TWO NEW BOOKS ON AMAZON: RAV SHA’UL AND REFLECTIONS ON TORAH. TO SEE MORDECAI’S BOOKS GO TO: [HTTPS://WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG/SHOP-OUR-STORE/PRINT-AND-KINDLE-BOOKS/](https://www.etz-chayim.org/shop-our-store/print-and-kindle-books/)

FOR RABBI HAMMOND’S BOOK GO TO AMAZON.COM AS WELL.

CHECK OUT RABBI MORDECAI SILVERS 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

MESSIANIC TEACHING ON THE WEEKLY TORAH, HAFTARAH, AND APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE PORTIONS...



MESSAGE FOR 4-8-23 PESACH

Pesach - Passover
Exodus – Shemoth 33:12-34:26
Numbers – Bamidbar 28:19-25
Ezekiel 37:1-14
Revelation 22:17

The entire Seder ceremony is replete with symbolic gestures. We drink four cups of wine to represent four Biblical expressions of redemption. We dip and lean like kings to represent freedom and eat bitter herbs to remind us about the bitter slavery. We also eat other symbolic foods that portray our Egyptian bondage: salt water to remember tears, and charoses, a mixture of apples, nuts, and wine that looks like mortar, to remind us of the laborious years in Egypt.

The service is truly filled with symbolism - some direct, and some seemingly far-fetched - and all the symbols are meant to remind us of the slavery we endured centuries ago. But why not take a direct approach? There are overt ways to declare our gratitude, and there are more immediate ways to mark the celebration. Why don't we just recite the four expressions of redemption as part of the liturgy instead of drinking four cups of wine to

symbolize them? Why don't we place mortar on the table instead of making a concoction to represent it? And instead of reminding ourselves of backbreaking work by eating horseradish, why not lift heavy boxes?

A Jewish intellectual in post-war England approached Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky, who headed the London Beth Din (Jewish Religious Court), with a cynical question: "In reviewing our Haggadah service," he sniped, "I was shocked at the insertion of, 'Who Knows One', a childish nursery rhyme, at the end. Why would the sages put a silly rhyme - 'One is Hashem, two are the Tablets, three are the fathers,' and so on, at the end of the solemn, intellectual Seder night service? It is very unbecoming!"

Rabbi Abramsky was not shaken. "If you really want to understand the depth of that song, then you must travel north to the town of Gateshead. There you will find a saintly Jew, Reb Elya Lopian. I want you to discuss the meaning of every aspect of life with him. Ask him what the meaning of the sea and fish are, ask him what the meaning of the sun and the moon is. Then ask him what the meaning is of one, of six, of eleven and so on."

The philosopher was very intrigued. He traveled to Gateshead and located the Yeshiva at which Reb Elya served as the Mashgiach (spiritual advisor). He was led into the room where a saintly looking man greeted him warmly.

"Rabbi, I have many questions," the skeptical philosopher began. "What is the meaning of life?" "What is the essence of the stars?" And so on.....

Rabbi Lopian dealt with each question with patience, depth, and a remarkable clarity. Then the man threw out the baited question. "What is the meaning of the number one?"

Rabbi Lopian's face brightened, his eyes widened, and a broad smile spread across his face. "The meaning of one?" he repeated. "You would like to know the meaning of one? One is Hashem in the heaven and the earth!"

The man was shocked. "What about the depth of the numeral five?"

"Five?" repeated the sage. Why five has tremendous symbolism! It represents the foundation of Judaism - the Five Books of Moses!" The rabbi then went on to explain the mystical connotations that are

represented by the number five, and exactly how each Book of the Torah symbolizes a component of the sum.

The man left with a new approach and attitude toward the simplest of our rituals.

At the Seder, we train ourselves to find new meaning in the simple things in life. We teach ourselves to view the seemingly mundane with historical and even spiritual significance. We should remember that when Moshe saw a burning yet non-consumed bush, he realized that his nation is similar - constantly persecuted and harassed, yet never consumed. At our Seder, we view horseradish not as a condiment for gefilte fish, but as representative of our suffering. The Matzoh is no longer a low-fat cracker but symbolizes the hardships of exile and the speed of our redemption. In addition, we finish the Seder with a simple song that reminds everyone at the Seder, next time you ask, "who's number one?" don't accept the answer: the New York Yankees or the Chicago Bulls - think on a higher plane! One is Hashem in the heaven and the earth!

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes would take the water of life as a gift.

We include a Traditional Torah Commentary and my Messianic Commentary. The reason for this is so you can see a Messianic Perspective and a Traditional Jewish one. Remember to use discernment in approaching Traditional Jewish teachings as they do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. There are various ideas in traditional Jewish circles about the Messiah and even that there is no Messiah, the thinking in Reform Judaism. So, please be careful to balance the teachings.

We do not agree with the Jewish position on Yeshua, but Believers need to know the Jewish thinking on Yeshua and not buy into this thinking and forsake faith in our Messiah. For those who say they would never do this, we must beg to differ, because we have seen it over our lives as Jewish Believer's in Yeshua. We have been Believer's in Messiah Yeshua for decades. We have seen a lot and had many discussions with our fellow Jews and non-Jews who ultimately turned away from Yeshua because they steeped themselves in Jewish teachings. One does not

come out of either traditional Judaism or Christianity and come into the Messianic walk, and then going back, or into, traditional Judaism. *There are many good things in Judaism but denying Yeshua as Messiah is not one of them.* Berachot (Blessings), Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph.D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D.

A TRADITIONAL JEWISH PARASHAH AND HAFTARAH COMMENTARY



Biblical Readings for Passover

The selections highlight different aspects of the holiday.

Following is a summary of the special Torah readings and Haftarah readings for the days of Passover.

First Day

Torah Reading

In the Torah reading (Exodus 12:21-51), Moses instructs the elders of Israel in all of the laws of Passover. All generations to come are to observe the Passover traditions. In addition, the children of succeeding generations are to be instructed at Passover as to the origin and significance of the festival.

The Torah reading concludes with the last of the 10 plagues: the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn. Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron and tells them that he wants them out of Egypt as soon as possible. Moses and Aaron comply, and the children of Israel begin to make a quick exit, not allowing time for their bread to rise.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah is taken from the Book of Joshua (Joshua 5:2-6:1, 6:27) and describes the historic Passover that the Israelites observed at Gilgal after they had crossed the Jordan River. It was the first celebration of Passover in the Holy Land. In preparation for Passover observance, all of

the Israelite males were circumcised. They then ate the first *matzot* made from wheat in the Holy Land. [In the Reform tradition Isaiah 43:1-15 is the prophetic reading for the first day of Passover. This reading, which contains a reference to crossing the Red Sea, is a reminder of God's role as Redeemer.]

Second Day

Torah Reading

In the Torah reading (Leviticus 22:26-23:44), Moses instructs the Israelites in the observance of the Sabbath and festivals. The reading presents a comprehensive description of the sacred seasons of the Jewish year, including Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah for the second day of Passover (II Kings 23:1-9, 21-25) was chosen because of its account of the great Passover celebrated after King Josiah's reformation. In the 18th year of his reign (621 BCE), during the course of repairs to the Temple, a scroll of the Torah (possibly the Book of Deuteronomy) was discovered. King Josiah was so stirred by its message that he proceeded to vigorously cleanse the Temple of all idolatry. Part of the account of his reform prefaces the description of his celebration of Passover in the Haftarah, and thus its selection as the Haftarah of the second day of Passover.

The Intermediate Shabbat

Shabbat Torah

(Exodus 33:12-34:26) After Israel worshipped the golden calf, Moses shattered the first set of tablets. Now Moses again ascends Mount Sinai in order to receive the new set of tablets. Moses pleads for God's assurance of support. God reassures Moses and also reveals His 13 divine attributes. Moses then brings down a new set of tablets with the Ten Commandments.

Shabbat Haftarah

The Haftarah is taken from the Book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1-14). The prophet finds himself in a valley of dry bones and, under the vivifying effect of God's spirit, the bones knit together and become covered with flesh. Ezekiel understands this vision to mean that the people of Israel, having been exiled to Babylon, will again be reborn as a nation.

Both the fact that Passover, recalling past deliverances, looks forward to future redemption and an old tradition that the resurrection of the dead will take place during Passover determined the choice of this passage as the Haftarah for the Intermediate Sabbath of Passover.

Seventh Day

Torah Reading

The Torah reading (Exodus 13:17-15:26) describes Israel's experiences following the exodus. Pharaoh mobilizes the Egyptian army and begins his pursuit of the fleeing Israelites. When Moses and the children of Israel reach the Red Sea, Moses raises his rod, the waters split apart,

and the Israelites are miraculously saved. When the Egyptians reach the water, they become bogged down, sink to the bottom, and drown. Moses and the children of Israel sing a magnificent song of thanksgiving.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah (Second Samuel 22) connects to the theme of thanksgiving in the Torah reading. In the Haftarah, King David composes his own song of thanksgiving to God for all of his victories and deliverances from the enemy. The Haftarah concludes with this sentence, which is also included at the conclusion of the grace after meals, “A tower of salvation of His king, who shows mercy to His anointed, to David and to his heirs forever” (Second Samuel 22:51).

Eighth Day

Torah Reading

The Torah reading for the eighth day of Passover (Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17) deals with a variety of laws, including those related to tithes, the year of release, the release of slaves, and a comprehensive description of the three pilgrimage festivals.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah, from the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 10:32-12:6), begins with a prediction that Assyria will be defeated. This prophecy comes true. The Haftarah continues with Isaiah’s message of hope that the Israelites will again be gathered together from lands of exile and return to Israel.

The Haftarah also contains the famous great vision of the Messianic Era when peace and harmony will reign supreme among all people. Because the Haftarah contains several allusions to the redemption from Egypt, it was especially chosen to be chanted on the last day of Passover.

The Song of Songs

It is customary to read the biblical book Song of Songs on the intermediate Shabbat of Passover. (In 2018, there is no intermediate Shabbat, so it is read on the final day of the holiday, which coincides with Shabbat.) Rabbinic tradition interprets the book as a love song, where the “beloved” is taken to mean God and “the bride” to mean the congregation of Israel. This tradition made the Song of Songs especially appropriate to Passover, because it marked, as it were, the beginning of the courtship of Israel and God before, metaphorically speaking, they became finally wedded at Mount Sinai by Israel’s acceptance of the Torah.

Another reason given for the reading of this book on Passover is that it is a song of the spring. To the poet and the singer, spring is synonymous with hope and happiness. A people’s hope lies in its freedom and its attachment to the law of God. This, too, is the lesson of Passover, for which the people of Israel have fought since they left Egyptian servitude, and this is the eternal message it wishes to convey to the whole of the human race.



From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond

WORDS OF WISDOM CHAPTER 30

We Jews will often use the phrase, “evil inclination”, when discussing the various topics associated with everyday life. Unfortunately, the use of this phrase is increasing at an alarming rate in our daily conversations. Each day we witness the manifestation of the “evil inclination”. This rise of evil is not only increasing but it is becoming increasingly violent with tragic outcomes. The reason behind this rise of the “evil inclination” is the rejection of HaShem, the Holy One of Israel. Any community that is beholden to any other system outside of Torah is a community without hope. I say without hope because not only will such a community be plagued by the evil inclination, but The Almighty will destroy evil in His time. We agree with David when he wrote about the attitude HaShem has toward evil.

“For you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity; You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” Psalm 5:4-6 [NKJV]

The Almighty takes no pleasure in acts of wickedness! However, we then must ask, “What are acts of wickedness”? This is an important question, because what one person calls acts of wickedness another may call an act of goodness. We witness this in our everyday life. The subject of homosexuality springs to mind when we contemplate the differences in opinion regarding wickedness and goodness. The problem is that when it

comes to acts of “goodness” or “wickedness” people’s opinions have no sway with the Holy One of Israel. If HaShem calls an act wicked, then it is an act of wickedness. If HaShem calls an act good, then it is indeed an act of goodness. So, our choices in regard to the subject of good and evil are straight forward. We either choose what The Almighty calls wicked or we don’t. We either choose what the Almighty calls good or we don’t.

The Torah is the document that outlines what the Almighty calls wicked or good. The Torah is the document that outlines the path we must walk if we are to engage in acts of goodness. As Children of HaShem, if we claim to want to please our Father in heaven and walk in the footsteps of HaMoshiach Yeshua, then we must be found embracing a Torah lifestyle. Those who promote the idea that we no longer are required to embrace the Torah are promoting falsehood. They may not be doing it out of pure rebellion, but it is not helping the whole House of Israel to unite and walk as our Father would have us walk. History surely tells us that when we Children of Israel are left to our own devices, making up our own “torah” then we are destined for trouble and untold heartache. There is a saying that well describes the nature of fallen humanity. “Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely”. Unfortunately, in most of cases this proves to be the norm. The beauty of Torah is that it brings us back to reality showing us that not only are we not in charge but left to our own devices we will be destroyed.

The wickedness that we are capable of has no boundaries. History surely proves our ability to justify the most horrific actions. Our societies are now rewarding those that reject the Holy One of Israel and His Children. None the less we Children of Israel must concern ourselves with our own faithfulness as our Father will clean this whole mess up in His perfect time. It is our responsibility to stay true to The Almighty knowing that He will bring us through into His presence. We may not escape unscathed on this present earth, but He will supply the strength we require in every situation. Let us take care of our own salvation and lend a helping hand to any who want to join us on this journey. HaShem will reward the wicked according to His righteousness and we will witness the downfall of those that are blinded to His Torah and HaMoshiach Yeshua. Truly the words of the Master Yeshua ring loud in our ears.

“.....Every plant which My Heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides of

the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man; both will fall into a pit.” Matthew 15:13-14 [NASB]

We need to make sure we are part of the tree our Heavenly Father has planted and nurtured through Yeshua HaMoshiach and Torah. For me this is called the Tree of Life. This Tree provides all the fruit we require. Unfortunately, we continue to be drawn towards the tree of good and evil, ever ready to partake of fruit that pleases the flesh, constantly eroding away our relationship with HaShem, Yeshua HaMoshiach and Torah. The further we drift away from HaShem the more difficult it is to keep sight of Him, thus opening ourselves up to declaring another as The Almighty. Sadly, I have witnessed this at numerous Christian rallies, where the most ungodly actions and claims are attributed to God where participants are dogmatic that it is a “move” of the Holy Spirit. If you do not know the Torah, then your chances of becoming deceived by these antics and those that are coming is greatly increased. **DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE CUNNING OF SATAN!** He has no scruples and as Yeshua said, Satan is a liar, a murderer and there is no truth in him.

A question for us is: “Whose words are we listening too?” Are we listening to institution leaders who reject the Torah and thus the biblical Yeshua, or are we listening to our Father through the teachings and guidance of Torah and Yeshua? Take the time to analyze the teachings of your leaders and institution. Do this in a spirit of humility and a genuine seeking of the Holy One of Israel. We all make mistakes, and we can all say, “But for the grace of God go I.” None the less we should not be afraid to be as the Bereans and study the Word of God. We must show respect to those who are in positions of leadership, but we do not have to follow them blindly, as we know what happens when the blind are leading the blind. It is vital that we invest the time to draw closer to The Almighty. We do this through consistent prayer and biblical studies. Our only hope as a people and as a nation is to ensure our standing before the Holy One of Israel is according to Torah, the same teachings Yeshua taught His disciples.

Learning the teachings of our Father is a lifelong engagement. If we lived for a thousand years, we would still fail to grasp the full teachings of our Father. There are always gems of value to be added to our lives through greater understanding of Torah. Yet for most of us the “basics” keep us occupied as we struggle to adhere to their teachings. What many fail to grasp is learning is only one step in our process to walking in the footsteps

of HaMoshiach Yeshua. It is our actions that witness our response to our learning. An example is the many Christians who learn the pagan history of Christmas yet continue to engage in this festival instead of celebrating the Moedim [God's appointed times].

Do not ignore the ability of our evil inclination to justify our wicked behaviour. Our people and thus our nation, has a sad history of allowing the evil inclination to rule our actions, thus our lives. We are ordained to be a holy [Set apart] nation! We cannot be this nation if we allow our evil inclination to influence us making poor decisions and rejecting our Father's teachings. It is the opinion of this author that the battle against our evil inclination will intensify as the return of HaMoshiach approaches. The father of lies and deception [Satan] will increase his attack on Israel and the people of Israel. In making this statement I am including all peoples who make up the nation of Israel, no matter whom they are or where they dwell at present.

The need to study and know Torah [The teachings of the Holy One of Israel] is at a premium. Please do not neglect this necessity as you will be in danger of becoming controlled by your evil inclination.

May the grace, love, and wisdom of HaShem and Yeshua HaMoshiach be with you!

This, that and the other ...



10 Passover Customs from Around the World

Many Jewish communities have developed unique Passover traditions that make the holiday more lively and relevant.

For over a thousand years, Jews around the world have used largely the same Hebrew text for the Passover seder. Though there are many different editions of the haggadah, the core text is almost always the same. Similarly, in keeping with the strictures of the Torah and Mishnah, Jews around the world eat many of the same ritual foods, like matzah, maror and haroset.

Within this framework, there is still plenty of room for innovation and customization, especially when seder hosts seek to make the Passover themes of liberation and memory relevant to their own cultures and familial experiences. As a result, Jewish communities around the world have developed a number of unique Passover traditions. Some have become more well-known in recent years, such as the Sephardic tradition of singing Had Gadya in Ladino or Moroccan communities marking the end of Passover with a carb-fueled festive meal called Mimouna. Here are 10 more lesser-known Passover traditions from around the world.

1. Next Level Passover Cleaning

Like most Jewish communities, Kurdish Jews begin preparing for Passover after the end of Purim. However, Passover cleaning traditionally involved washing the bags that held rice, lentils and other legumes — as well as the foods themselves — several times to ensure that no hametz or insects could render the food treif for Passover. Kurdish Jews would also paint their walls in the days before Passover, although the origin of that custom is unclear.

2. A Bloody Hamsa

In Mumbai, India, Jews mimic the Passover lamb's blood that was smeared across the entrances to Israelite homes in Egypt on the eve of their liberation. The Bene Israel Jews dip their hands in the blood of a sheep or goat. Then, they press their hands to blank pieces of paper and hang the prints above their doorway. The imprint resembles a hamsa, and like the amulet, symbolizes good luck and protection.

3. A Seder Table of Jewels and Gold

In some parts of Hungary and Austria, women at the seder would decorate the table with their jewelry collections, based on this passage from Exodus 3:21-22 in which the escaping Jews are permitted by God to loot the Egyptians who had enslaved them for generations:

And I will dispose the Egyptians favorably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians. Exodus 3:21-22

4. Grass, Candy and Coins from Grandpa

Jews from Turkey recall the wealth that the Israelites brought out of Egypt differently. The patriarch of the family throws grass (symbolizing the Red Sea's reeds), coins and/or candy for children to collect. While tossing the items, the father or grandfather will also share wishes for a productive year ahead.

5. Retelling through Reenactment

In Góra Kalwaria, the town in Poland that the Ger Hasidic movement originates from, families would pour water on their floor, and then family members would reenact the moment when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea by walking through it. This custom always occurs on the seventh day of Passover, because Jewish tradition says that the seventh day is when the Israelites reached the sea. As they walk through the water, some Jews will name the towns and cities that their ancestors were displaced from in Europe.

Some Romanian Jewish families also recreated scenes from the Exodus by filling a bag or pillowcase with heavy objects and walking around the seder table several times while carrying it, to remember the Israelites leaving Egypt with their belongings on their backs.

6. Pharaoh's Cup

While filling a cup for Elijah — and sometimes for Miriam and/or Ruth — is a familiar ritual at most seders, the Jews of India also fill a cup not for a hero but a villain: Pharaoh. The wine from this cup is then dumped into the glasses of each seder participant, as a snub at the wicked Egyptian king.

7. No Seder Plate Here

Yemenite Jews don't use a dish for their seder plate. Instead, the entire table is utilized as a seder plate, with the vegetables arranged aesthetically. This lack of a plate likely reflects ancient practice. In the time of the rabbis, food was commonly served on trays that were set on stools to create individual tables for eating.

Jews in Tunisia similarly do not use a plate; instead, the ritual foods that are otherwise found on a seder plate are placed into a reed basket, to evoke Moses being placed in a basket as an infant. The matriarch of the house then takes the reed basket and hovers it over each guest's head. The matriarch says, "We left Egypt." The guest replies, "Yesterday, we were slaves."

Today, we are free. This year, we are here. Next year, we will be free people in the land of Israel.”

Jewish communities in Morocco recite a similar dialogue; however, Moroccan Jews use a seder plate rather than a reed basket.

8. Passover in Ethiopia

Since Beta Israel Jews did not encounter rabbinic Judaism until the 1900s, Passover celebrations in Ethiopia were derived solely from local customs and the Torah. Ethiopian Jews understood the word hametz to include all fermented foods, and would refrain from consuming yogurt, butter, cheese and any leavened drinks.

Beta Israel would also perform the ritual slaughtering of a Passover lamb and smear its blood above the entrances to their synagogues. In place of haggadot, the Israelites’ oppression and liberation was recounted by reading directly from a *sefer Torah*.

Today, many Ethiopian Jews — especially in Israel — have adopted rabbinic customs like haggadot and seder plates.

9. Mystical Yachatz

In many Jewish communities that originate in North Africa, breaking the middle matzah (*yachatz*) takes on a mystical meaning. The matzah is broken to resemble the Hebrew letter “hey,” which has kabbalistic connotations of redemption at the seder. The letter hey was chosen because its numerical value is five and the fifth cup of wine at the seder is poured for Elijah, the prophet that will announce the coming of the messiah.

Some Syrian Jews break the middle matzah to resemble the Hebrew letters “dalet” and “vav.” The numerical values of the letters add up to 10, which can represent the 10 plagues or the 10 *sefirot* — mystical emanations of God.

10. Scallion Whips

When chanting Dayenu, some Persian and Afghan Jews have the custom of beating each other lightly on the back with scallions or leeks. This tradition symbolizes the whipping that the Israelites endured in Egypt while enslaved.

PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY



The Seder Plate and Its Symbolism

There are a number of symbols that occur throughout the seder, but perhaps the focal point of the whole event is the seder plate. It contains a roasted shank bone, symbolizing the Pesach sacrifice in the Temple, a roasted egg symbolizing either the spring season or mourning (for the destruction of Jerusalem), *maror* (bitter herbs) to represent the bitter experience of the Hebrew slaves, *haroset* (a mixture of apples, nuts, raisins, spices, wine) symbolizing the mortar the Hebrew slaves used to build for the Egyptians, and *karpas* (parsley, celery, or another green vegetable) symbolizing the green of spring. The table must also have three pieces of *matzah*, sometimes held in a special pouch.

עֲבָרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה

Pe-sach Who Lah-Ye-ho-vah

Passover of YHVH



A Taste of Jewish Humor

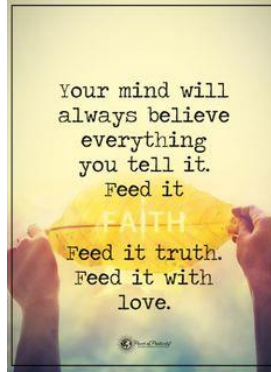
Richest Man in Town

At the funeral of the richest man in town, a stranger saw a woman crying very loudly. The stranger said, “Are you a relative of the deceased?”

“No.”

“Then why are you crying?”

“That’s why!”



This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup

French Onion Brisket Recipe

Drawing inspiration from French onion soup, this recipe honors both tradition and innovation.

Ingredients

- 1 (5-to 6-pound) beef brisket, fat cap intact
- kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 5 large, sweet onions, thinly sliced
- 12 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 1 cup Calvados or sherry
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 6 sprigs thyme
- 4 sprigs sage

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

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2. Season each side of the brisket with 2 heavy pinches each of salt and pepper. In a large Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Sear the brisket, turning it as needed, until golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the brisket to a platter.
 3. Reduce the heat to medium, then add the onions and garlic to the pot. Cook, stirring often, until softened and caramelized, 20 to 25 minutes. Add the Calvados, then stir continuously with a wooden spoon for 1 minute to scrape up any browned bits on the bottom of the pot.
 4. Stir in the stock and 2 heavy pinches each of salt and pepper, then return the brisket to pot. Tie together the thyme and sage sprigs with a small piece of butcher's twine (tying is optional, but makes it much easier to remove the herbs after cooking) and nestle the herb bundle in the pot. Bring to a simmer, then cover the pot and transfer it to the oven. Cook for 3 hours to 3 hours 30 minutes, until very tender when pierced with a fork. Remove from the oven and let cool completely, then refrigerate overnight.
 5. The next day, skim off and discard any fat, if desired, and discard the herbs. Transfer the brisket to a cutting board and cut it across the grain (perpendicular to the fibers you'll see running through the brisket) into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Return the meat to the sauce and heat over medium heat until warmed through. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, then serve.
 6. **For Brisket Pasta:** This recipe is delicious, but while everyone is fighting over the meat, I'm just thinking about the sauce. I save all the braising liquid, packed with lil' bits of fallen-apart meat, and use it as the king of pasta sauces. It's truly better than any ragù or Sunday gravy you could dream of. Simply cook pasta (rotini is my go-to!) until it's just al dente, then drain and drop into a simmering pot of a few cups of the leftover braising liquid to finish cooking and let the liquid reduce down to coat the noodles. If you're feeling wild, finish it off by making it rain Parmesan!

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SPACE FOR NOTES