

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOSTING "MESSIAH IN THE PASSOVER"

## Introduction:

Passover is the commemoration of God's deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt (see Exodus 12 and following for the biblical record). It comes in the spring of each year, in March or April. The reason for the variance is that Jewish people follow a lunar calendar while the Western world adopted a solar calendar. Passover always falls on Nisan 14 on the Jewish calendar.

Passover is a time for family celebration around the table – a time for special foods and traditions, similar to what Christians may do at Christmas or Easter. In a Jewish home this special meal is called a ***Seder*** (Hebrew word meaning "order"). In commemorating the Passover, the meal and service follow a set order.

## Hosting a *Seder*:

Many Christians have benefited from hosting a Passover *Seder*\* in their churches. Hosting a *Seder* requires a good deal of effort (particularly for the cooks!), but those who help with the preparation testify it makes the event more meaningful. Believers who attend gain insight into the Lord's Supper, for communion was instituted by Jesus at a Passover meal. Seeing how the traditional elements point to Messiah's death, burial, and resurrection makes a powerful impact.

You may decide how closely you wish to duplicate an "authentic Jewish *Seder*," and how elaborate you want the event to be. We have included several menu options; your selections will determine how much money and effort will be expended. You may wish to use disposable plates or your good place settings. Use of nice napkins and tablecloths, or putting fresh flowers on the tables, add to the atmosphere – but also to your budget.

## Seder leader:

Life in Messiah staff are available; our staff do not charge a fee, but appreciate an honorarium toward their ministry support in addition to having travel expenses met.

## Menu considerations:

Observant Jewish people do not eat any food with leaven (yeast, baking soda, or baking powder) during Passover. Neither will they eat dairy and meat products together during a meal. If you wish to observe these guidelines for the *Seder* it will give you insight into the Jewish dietary restrictions. (You may wish to inform people of why you are doing this, as folks will wonder why no bread, butter, or cream is on the table.)

Jewish people normally use wine for their *Seder*. Since evangelical Christians often abstain from alcohol, grape juice is typically substituted at our *Seders*. If you want to get a little fancier, choose the sparkling (carbonated) grape juice.

\* You may opt for a ***Seder demonstration*** suitable for an evening service or Sunday School format. Demonstrations provide an explanation rather than a "hands-on" experience. Though easier on the budget and less work (there is no meal to prepare), you lose much of the participatory element that adds to the uniqueness of the service.

# PLANNING GUIDELINE

## Program:

Adapt to suit needs/desires/budget of your congregation. Basic decisions about program include these considerations:

Purpose – informative (for Christians) or evangelistic (the gospel is a key part of the presentation)

Funding – how will expenses be covered (tickets, love offering, or other)?

Costs may include:

- ✧ Food – meal and Passover elements, including juice (see attached sheet)
- ✧ Advertising – poster, bulletin insert (available from Life in Messiah), newspaper ad
- ✧ Printing – tickets, program folders
- ✧ Decorations – candles, flowers
- ✧ Speaker – travel expenses, honorarium
- ✧ Special music (taped or live; Messianic music adds to the atmosphere)

Timing – Please note when doing the “full Seder” (including a meal), the kitchen staff (and perhaps those with blood sugar issues for whom meal timing is critical) need to be alerted to the schedule:

- ✧ Once the Seder begins, the first portion of the presentation is approximately 45-55 minutes in length. This includes tasting some of the elements (e.g., matzah, horseradish, *haroset*).
- ✧ When the song “Dayeinu” is sung, the kitchen staff can figure 10 minutes until the meal, so the food can be readied to serve.
- ✧ Following the meal another 20-30 minutes of teaching will finish the Seder.
- ✧ An earlier start time for the Seder may be appropriate if possible.

Personnel:

- ✧ Set up and take down (tables, decorations, sound equipment)
- ✧ Cooks and servers (family style, or wait staff)
- ✧ Sound system technician
- ✧ Cleanup crew (bussers, dishwashers)

## Suggestions:

Head table – the *Seder* leader's table should be situated to give the best sight lines possible. No more than four should be seated at the head table (with an extra place setting and chair for Elijah at one end). Six- or eight-foot tables work best.

General seating – round tables promote conversation over the meal; when rectangular tables are used, they may be angled for ease of viewing the head table.

## Seder Elements (for each table):

**Parsley sprigs** – one sprig per person (parsley sprigs, as well as several other elements listed below, may be placed in small soup bowls for ease in passing around the table)

**Haroset** – bowl containing 1-2 tablespoons per person. [*Haroset* is a mixture of finely chopped apples and walnuts, cinnamon, and enough grape juice to keep the mixture moist. Recipes vary, so feel free to experiment, but consistency should be more like mortar than applesauce.]

**Horseradish** – bowl with two heaping tablespoons; everyone gets a good taste!

**Salt water** – bowl of water with sufficient salt to taste

**Matzah** – three unleavened bread "boards" (6" x 6" piece) per table – usually sold 10 or 12 to a box

**Grape juice** – plain or sparkling; enough to refill 1 small (2 oz.) cup 4 times per person

### Elements for Head Table Only (in addition to the above):

One each:

- ✧ Hard-boiled egg – unshelled; one needed for head table only
- ✧ Lamb shankbone (Life in Messiah staff may bring one if difficult to acquire)
- ✧ Small (6"-8") bowl of plain water
- ✧ Linen napkin
- ✧ Tapered non-drip candle in candleholder
- ✧ Gas match lighter or small box of matches

### Additional Supplies:

**Haggadot** (*hah-gah-doht*, plural form of *haggadah*, the Hebrew word meaning "telling") – booklets which contain the "order of service" and retell the story of Passover. For the *Seder* to be most interactive, it is best if each person has a copy. [Life in Messiah has a Messianic version available.]

**Place settings** – soup or salad bowls, coffee cups and saucers, beverage glass (with water available), dinner plates, dessert plates, cutlery, napkins, juice tumblers (plastic 3 oz. size is fine), small bowls for elements, and salt and pepper shakers. Traditionally, in a Jewish home, this is the nicest meal of the year.

**Table settings** – matzah plates or baskets (sandwich three whole matzah boards between four napkins or paper towels, and place in basket or plate on each table); tablecloths (remember, grape juice will be used!)

**Decorations** (optional) – candles and/or flowers may be placed on the tables; be aware that table space is limited by the number of Passover elements (as listed above)

If you have any questions or to schedule a Messiah in the Passover, please feel free to contact us at: 708.418.0020 or [info@lifeinmessiah.org](mailto:info@lifeinmessiah.org)

We are here to help!