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*Instructions for hosting a*



# MESSIAH IN THE PASSOVER SEDER

## Introduction:

Passover is the joyful celebration 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 believers 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, since 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. [NOTE: the head table typically will not have room for flowers as a number of "extras" are needed there.]

## Seder leader:

Life in Messiah staff love to lead seders! Our calendars fill up around Passover/Easter so it is wise to reserve your dates early. And while it's fitting to celebrate Passover close to the actual date, we are happy to present Messiah in the Passover at any time of year. We do not charge a fee but appreciate an honorarium toward ministry support in addition to having travel expenses met (checks made payable to Life in Messiah).

## 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 or sparkling grape juice is typically substituted.

*\* 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 the desires/budget of your congregation. Decisions about program include:

**Purpose/Guests** – informative (for Christians) or evangelistic (the gospel is a key part). We also love it when people invite their Jewish friends to attend, informing them this is a “Messiah (Jesus) in the Passover” and not a traditional Jewish seder. Children are encouraged to attend and will have an active role. (NOTE: children under age 6 may find it hard to sit still for the duration.)

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

Costs may include:

- ✧ Food – meal and Passover elements, including juice (see **Seder Recipes** document)
- ✧ Advertising – poster, bulletin insert, flyer (we have a template if you wish to use it)
- ✧ Printing – tickets, program
- ✧ Decorations – centerpieces, flowers (optional)
- ✧ Speaker – travel expenses, honorarium
- ✧ Special music – if desired, background music (pre-recorded or live) may be played when guests are gathering; Messianic music adds to the atmosphere)

**Timing** – Please note when doing the “full seder” (including a meal), the kitchen staff (and those attending) need to be alerted to the schedule:

- ✧ Once the seder begins, the first portion of the presentation is approximately 60 minutes. This includes tasting some of the elements (e.g., matzah, horseradish, *haroset*).
- ✧ The kitchen staff can follow along in the Haggadah (seder booklet) to determine when to have the food ready (about 10 minutes after eating the horseradish).
- ✧ Following the meal another 20-30 minutes of teaching will finish the seder.
- ✧ **An earlier start time for the seder is recommended. Please notify cooks the meal will be served approximately one hour after the seder actually begins. Please also inform the guests beforehand that the meal will be served halfway through to set right expectations. Please allow 2–2.5 hours total for the event.** A timeline example: 4:45 pm – doors open; 5:00 pm – seder starts; 6:00 pm – meal is served; 7:30 pm – seder concludes.

**Personnel:**

- ✧ A planning team (provide them with this document and recipes)
- ✧ Set up and take down – tables, decorations, sound equipment
- ✧ Cooks and servers – buffet, family style, or wait staff [NOTE: the biggest variable in length of the seder is the meal. If a buffet is preferred, consider multiple serving stations to reduce time.]
- ✧ Sound system technician – wireless mic, handheld mic, music, optional PowerPoint
- ✧ Cleanup crew – bussers, dishwashers

## Seating:

**Head table** – the seder leader’s table should be situated to give the best sightlines possible. Set with an extra place setting and chair for Elijah at one end; the side closest to the audience should have no seating, as that obscures their view of the presentation. 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. If you have the space, you may consider chairs on one side of the table so that everyone can easily see without having to turn around.

## Seder Elements (pre-set on each table):

**Parsley sprigs** – one small sprig per person (parsley sprigs, as well as several other elements listed below, may be placed in small 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 grape juice. Recipes vary, but consistency should be more like mortar. See the **Seder Recipes** document. You may want to have a **nut-free** version available.]

**Horseradish** – bowl with approximately ½ tsp. per person. The stronger the horseradish the better! Ensure it is just horseradish and not a sauce with mayonnaise.

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

**Matzah** – three unleavened bread “boards” per table – usually sold 10 or 12 to a box. Separated and covered with napkins. You may want to have **gluten-free matzah** available.

**Grape juice** – plain or sparkling; enough to refill one small (2 oz.) cup four times per person. [NOTE: only one cup needed per person; if larger cups are used, more grape juice likely will be needed for refilling.]

**Water pitchers** – it is preferable to have water available at each table (especially after horseradish)! Water glasses can be pre-filled, with a full pitcher available for refills.

**Napkin or small paper plate** – needed to place 10 drops of grape juice.

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

One each:

- ✧ Hard-boiled egg – not peeled [NOTE: **just one** is needed for head table only.]
- ✧ Lamb shank bone (Life in Messiah staff may bring one if difficult to acquire)
- ✧ Small (6”–8”) bowl of plain water for handwashing
- ✧ Linen/cloth napkin or small hand towel for drying hands
- ✧ Two tapered non-drip candles in candleholders
- ✧ Gas match lighter or small box of matches

## Additional Supplies:

**Haggadot** (*hah-gah-doh*, 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. Typically, they are provided by the Life in Messiah representative; please confirm this with your speaker. [If planning a virtual seder, find an online version here: [www.lifeinmessiah.org/interactive-seder](http://www.lifeinmessiah.org/interactive-seder).]

**Place settings** – soup or salad bowls, dinner plates, dessert plates, one water glass, and one small grape juice glass (approx. 2 oz) per person, coffee cups (optional), cutlery, napkins.

**Table settings** – matzah plates (separate three whole boards between four napkins, one plate per table); tablecloths (remember, grape juice will be used!), small bowls (or clear cups) for elements, bowls for salt water (one per table), salt and pepper shakers, and pitchers of grape juice and water. Optional coffee non-dairy creamer and sugars. [NOTE: A centerpiece is nice but you may run out of space.]

**If you have any questions or to schedule a Messiah in the Passover, please contact us at: (708) 418-0020 or [office@lifeinmessiah.org](mailto:office@lifeinmessiah.org). We are here to help!**