

OIM UPDATE

March 2012

One of the many blessings of approaching the walk of faith, through a Messianic lifestyle, is to have annual reminders of our Hebraic heritage, to refocus our hearts and minds on the Holy One of Israel. This month we enter into the season of the Spring holidays—which begin at *Purim*, and continue through Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, through the Counting of the Omer, and culminating at *Shavuot* or Pentecost. Hence for March, April, and May—there are many daily and commemorative reminders of our relationship with the Lord. These appointed times are observed within the Messianic community, to strengthen our faith by means of remembering the triumphs and struggles of our faithful predecessors.

Over our many years ministering to the Messianic faithful, we have compiled a number of useful publications to help Believers, who have come from different Christian faith traditions, to navigate and perhaps explain to others some of the inevitable questions that arise from adopting a Messianic lifestyle. Our *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* is a useful compilation of articles, designed to comprehensively explain the trek from *Purim* to Passover to *Shavuot*. Our *Haggadah for Messianic Believers* (and a leader's guide) is a thorough resource to use for commemorating the Passover in your home, encouraging participation of all who attend. And, my book *Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot*, is a series of reflections that will focus your attention for the seven-weeks between the Feast of Unleavened Bread and *Shavuot*. The *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* and *Counting the Omer* are both available in paperback and eBook for Amazon Kindle.

Since the beginning of the year, our **TNN Press Book Printing** project has made some significant strides, as fifteen updated and new paperback releases are now available—and with them new eBook releases as well. More is definitely on the way for this year, and we are certainly encouraged! We would also definitely like to thank you for your ongoing support of our **Prison Ministry**. The Spring holidays are a significant time when we get a wide number of requests for free copies of these books.

Some of the most exciting news this month—to be sure—is that we finally have our house in Central Florida under contract! *We are on our way back to Texas*. We are anticipating the house to close in May. While this is a definite answer to prayer, we have the logistics and expenses of moving to now consider.

In this month's OIM News, we are reproducing an article from the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*, "**The Restoration of Passover**," to give you a basic overview of significant Passover is for all of us.

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

THE RESTORATION OF PASSOVER

by Mark Huey

In this hour of restoration, the Holy One of Israel is forging ahead using a variety of circumstances to bring His people into a fuller understanding of Him and His Word. The festival of Passover, or *Pesach* (פֶּסַח) in Hebrew, is being utilized as one of the principal magnets for restoring all Israel. Yeshua described the reality that the true sheep will hear His voice, to various Pharisees and Disciples gathered centuries ago:

“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd” (John 10:14-16).

The Lord has never annulled the instruction for His people to remember the Exodus of Ancient Israel from Egypt. The Scriptures are very clear about this commandment, but as history and tradition have revealed, the replacement of a Passover observance by Easter via the Christian Church, has obscured the great blessings that come by obeying this remembrance (Leviticus 23:6-14). Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which take up eight days in the Spring, have been replaced by one day that recalls the resurrection of the Messiah Yeshua.

The problem is simply this: although the resurrection of our Messiah is of paramount importance in our spiritual understanding, **and remembering it is certainly worthy of our time and reflection**, it would be *far better* to follow our Creator’s plan for celebrating this awesome reality. He knows our hearts and proclivity to wander, and He commanded a time of remembrance that would engage our bodies, souls, and spirits over a period of several days, rather than just a few hours of recollection. As Believers today are being exposed to the Biblical admonition to observe Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the wisdom of following His ways becomes crystal clear. The Lord has been using the proliferation of Passover *seders* throughout the Christian world to ignite significant interest in Believers’ Hebraic Roots, and bless many people in unfathomable ways.

For the past several decades, as the Messianic Jewish movement has gained momentum and exposure, the Holy Spirit has been moving upon many Believers from all types of evangelical denominational backgrounds, to participate in these annual convocations along with Jewish Believers. Dedicated Messianic teachers have been asked to conduct Passover *seders* in a variety of settings. When the Messiah’s work as the Lamb of God is properly conveyed, these presentations become quite an eye-opener to many who are seeking the ancient paths of the Patriarchs and the Hebraic Roots of our faith.

Testimonies abound from Messianic Believers about how the Lord used a Passover *seder* at a church to encourage further examination and investigation into other topics, such as observing *Shabbat* or the dietary laws. Over the past

several years, a rule of thumb that I have personally witnessed is that when ten new people are exposed to a Passover *seder* at a church, at least one of the attendees wants more information concerning the Hebraic Roots of his or her faith. Now, the Spirit of God is amplifying the call to His people, and it appears that the percentages are increasing. Today, many Messianic fellowships and congregations often use these events for an outreach to their communities with varying degrees of success.

A few extremists contend that the Passover is strictly for the family of Believers who are physically circumcised.¹ Arguments can be made for both perspectives. If there is a concern or strong debate, then the recommendation from me would be to encourage family *Pesach* gatherings, preceding a more open communal event. This may be one way to circumvent the problem of those who should and who should not attend.

The firsthand evidence we have witnessed does suggest that many of those first exposed to a Passover *seder* have later been drawn into the Messianic movement. In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul seems to suggest, that by using different events to preach the good news of the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the lost will be found:

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’” (Romans 10:12-16).²

I believe it is up to the individual assemblies of Believers as to how they believe the Father would have them approach this blessed appointed time of convocation. Yet, Passover is a significant time that Christians can be exposed to our Hebraic Roots—and the Messianic community can provoke non-believing Jews to jealousy for faith in Messiah Yeshua!

Pesach and Our Jewish Brethren

While studying through the Torah portions on the annual Rabbinical calendar, you will discover that the Jewish Sages have augmented the importance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread with some instructive traditions. To the Messianic community of faith, the Jewish people, who were entrusted with the oracles of God (Romans 3:2), continue to share their wisdom for approaching the Holy One and His precepts.

The remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt is one of the most important events in the annual life of the Jewish community. As the cyclical Torah portions have been synchronized over the ages, the passages which deal specifically with

¹ Consult the article “Is Circumcision for Everyone?” by J.K. McKee for a further examination of this divisive topic.

² Cf. Joel 2:32; Isaiah 52:7; 53:1.

the Exodus just happen to line up with the months preceding Passover. This specific timing allows Torah teachers and students to study and prepare in advance for the yearly remembrance. By considering some specific passages during the Winter months before the month of Aviv/Nisan, hearts are being prepared for the *seder* meal, as Spring arrives and the Earth returns to a newness of life.

To compliment these traditional Torah readings from the Book of Exodus, the Rabbis have recommended a set of Haftarah readings that fall on four designated Sabbaths for special consideration. These are labeled: *Shabbat Shekalim*, *Shabbat Zachor*, *Shabbat Parah*, and *Shabbat HaChodesh*. Interestingly enough, when you analyze the timing and the subject matters of these additional Haftarah selections,³ you can discern that the Lord was indeed guiding the Sages' selection in order to enhance the Passover season.⁴

Shabbat Shekalim

2 Kings 11:21-12:16

First, on the Sabbath that precedes or coincides with the New Moon initiating Adar, the month prior to Aviv/Nisan, *Shabbat Shekalim* (shekels) is celebrated. The Haftarah reading is 2 Kings 11:21-12:16, which is usually complimented by an additional reading of Exodus 30:11-16. The subject being discussed is the commandment regarding the Temple tax of a half-shekel, that in many ways serves as a form of a census of the Israelite males who are twenty years of age and older. If you will recall, the half-shekel tax is not to be burdensome, and is small enough to be affordable to all regardless of their economic status. By making this contribution, which was designated for the service of the Tent of Meeting, the contributors indicate their allegiance to the established order as determined by God.

When you contemplate the choice of the 2 Kings passage that deals with the reinstitution of this "temple tax" by the high priest Jehoaïda, some other thoughts intrude. Here we discover that Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah for six years after the death of her husband Jehoram and her son Ahaziah. Many forget that the House of David's rule over Judah was interrupted until Joash, the seven-year old son of Ahaziah who was protected from the murderous Queen Mother Athaliah, was crowned king. The wise high priest Jehoaïda reestablished the half-shekel contribution as a way to determine who sided with the young king. In many respects, as the Jewish people reflect on this treacherous time and the steps that were taken by the Levites, they can be reminded of the constant perils that seek to destroy the heritage of the Patriarchs.

Shabbat Zachor

³ 2 Kings 12:1-12:17; 1 Samuel 15:2-15:34; Ezekiel 36:16-36:38; Ezekiel 45:16-46:18.

⁴ Consult Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *Complete ArtScroll Siddur, Nusach Ashkenaz* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1984), pp 870-911, for a summary of some traditional Orthodox Jewish liturgy employed during this time.

I Samuel 15:2-34

In a like manner, on *Shabbat Zachor* (Remember), the Sabbath that precedes the celebration of *Purim*, the concept of remembrance is reinforced. The Haftarah portion that is read is from 1 Samuel 15:2-34, with an additional reading from the Torah (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). The reminder that the Amalekites are always going to seek to destroy Israel is discussed. The 1 Samuel passage deals with King Saul's unwillingness to destroy the Amalekites as instructed by God. As you come to the end of the episode, the Prophet Samuel demonstrates the proper way to handle the demise of King Agag.

But, Agag's fall does not occur—as some Jewish commentators have speculated⁵—until he sires a child who became the forefather of the wicked Haman, who centuries later seeks to destroy the Jewish people throughout the Persian Empire. The Book of Esther, the basis for the upcoming *Purim* celebration, is contemplated as the realities of Amalek's desire to destroy Israel are considered. Finally, the following passage from the Torah is discussed to emphasize the need to remember:

“Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget” (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

Shabbat Parah

Ezekiel 36:16-38

The third of these special Sabbaths to prepare the heart for Passover, *Shabbat Parah* (Red Heifer/Lots), is celebrated on the week immediately following *Purim*. The two readings that are considered are Numbers 19:1-22, which deal specifically with the admonitions about the purification required by the ashes of the red heifer, and Ezekiel 36:16-38, which touches on the issues of a clean heart of flesh washed by the waters of purification. Once again, preparation for the upcoming Passover season is in mind, as these passages prepare the hearts of the faithful for the specific requirements of *Pesach* and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Here, just after the *Purim* reminder, the focus is personal purification, and yet, the entire red heifer ceremony is something inexplicable to human reasoning. It is simply required by the Lord for the Tabernacle/Temple service, obeyed by faith in order to comply with His Instruction.

Interestingly, much of this particular ordinance has to deal with the problems associated with handling dead people. Of course, this can be a delicate subject when you consider comments from Yeshua that described the dead in this manner: “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead” (Matthew 8:22). Is it possible He was stating that those without eternal life are essentially dead? And if so, does that mean that as we deal with people without spiritual life, we

⁵ Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *ArtScroll Tanach* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1996), 680.

are handling the dead, and hence are in constant need of purification? When you compliment this consideration with the words of Ezekiel 36, some other thoughts come to mind. Here, the Prophet Ezekiel begins a discussion about our need to be cleansed by the waters of purification, by likening Israel to a woman in her menstrual cycle, or a period of continual uncleanness:

“Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them” (Ezekiel 36:17-19).

When we approach the Passover season, we can contemplate the possibility that due to such a state of impurity, we might not be ready to be fully one with our Messiah. As Ezekiel continues prophesying, the waters of purification—sprinkled on a heart of flesh—brings the required state into being:

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness” (Ezekiel 36:25-29a).

Shabbat HaChodesh

Ezekiel 45:16-46:18

Finally, the Sabbath that precedes the New Moon of Aviv/Nisan is the fourth and last special week, called *Shabbat HaChodesh*. This Sabbath actually commemorates the first commandment given to the Israelites to begin the countdown to the fourteenth of Aviv/Nisan and the Passover season. Consequently, this Sabbath’s reading goes back to Exodus 12:1-20 and recalls the Angel of Death. The Haftarah portion which compliments it comes from Ezekiel 45:16-46:18. Here, the concurrent theme appears to be the New Moon and the need to acknowledge it.⁶ We may be reminded of how the Seleucids attempted to stop this remembrance when they were temporarily in power over Jerusalem (cf. 1 Maccabees 10:34). By stopping this annual rite, the momentum of following the rest of the *moedim* or appointed times of the Lord could be stopped.

So once again, the hearts of God’s people are being prepared for the coming of the Passover season. The additional reminder that the first of Aviv/Nisan has arrived now puts one on notice that the night of remembrance is approaching. As you can see, each of these special Sabbaths creates an atmosphere of expectation that is carried forward into the celebration of Passover.

Passover Restored

⁶ Consult the FAQ entry on the TNN website “New Moon.”

It is difficult to ascertain how many Messianic communities of faith incorporate these additional readings into their weekly examination of the Torah as the Passover season approaches. Certainly, as the celebration of the Biblical holidays continues to grow through time and our faith community expands, many will employ some of these traditions to prepare hearts for a more meaningful time of remembrance. Eventually, as the Prophet Jeremiah tells us, the commemoration of the Exodus will be altered as a greater Exodus will occur at some future time. We get our first glimpse of what Jeremiah is referring to when he admonishes God's people for their lack of observance of the Passover, and other basic commandments:

"Now when you tell this people all these words, they will say to you, 'For what reason has the LORD declared all this great calamity against us? And what is our iniquity, or what is our sin which we have committed against the LORD our God?' Then you are to say to them, '*It is because your forefathers have forsaken Me,*' declares the LORD, '*and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law. You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me. So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no favor. Therefore behold, days are coming,*' declares the LORD, '*when it will no longer be said, "As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt," but, "As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them."* For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,' declares the LORD, '*and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks. For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes*'" (Jeremiah 16:10-17).

Jeremiah rebukes his listeners for not obeying God's Torah, and as a result, the people will be scattered into the nations. But note that he declares how one day they will no longer talk about the Exodus out of Egypt, but will recall a gathering when the banished return from all the countries of the world. Today, this is occurring as many Jewish people are returning from Russia and the lands to the north, in partial fulfillment of this prophecy. But he further states that others, various fishers and hunters, will go out and seek the last remnants of Israel as well.

If we are in the Last Days, or are at least approaching them, then a clarity of understanding needs to come forth, as these prophecies are probably beginning to come to pass in some way. It is beneficial to consider some of the practices that have been employed over the years to encourage a more serious focus during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We need to become more serious about remembering the Exodus from Egypt. Perhaps when we sit in God's Kingdom one day in the future and talk about the work He has done, we will not be completely ignorant as we have learned what the Greater Exodus was through our commemoration of Passover.

Is it true that there are some substantial objections to the Last Supper being a Passover meal? If there are any, how do you respond to these arguments?



There are some objections that are commonly made to the Last Supper being a Passover meal, but very few of them are made in light of Yeshua's words to His Disciples: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). According to the Messiah, the meal that He *ate* with His Disciples was the Passover, and what may appear to be divergent accounts among the Gospel authors need to be theologically reconciled. The text does not say that He just *celebrated* the Passover, but specifically that He *ate* (Grk. *esthiō*, ἐσθίω) a *seder* meal. And while we commonly consider "Passover" to just be a holiday, in Scripture the *pesach* (פסח) can be the "sacrifice."^a

Some objections to the Last Supper being a Passover *seder* include the references to it occurring on the Day of Preparation (John 19:14), Passover eaten with solely a group of men as opposed to a family, the fact that there is no distinguishing between "bread" or "unleavened bread" in the accounts, and wine being consumed from a common cup. In contrast to this, the meal was eaten at night as the Passover should be, the obligatory drinking of wine was remembered, Yeshua and the Disciples customarily reclined for the meal, and a hymn was sung as was observed for Passover (Matthew 26:30). They do appear to have followed the prescribed protocol for a First Century Judean Jewish *Pesach*.

In total, it does seem that some modifications were made between Yeshua's *seder* meal and the main *seder* that would have been observed during His time. There have been various proposals made for this, including the thought that Yeshua's Last Seder was a "teaching *seder*" held between a Rabbi and students, or quite simply that the Lord held His Last Seder a day early as He was preparing to be sacrificed.^b

Resurrection, Commemorating: How do you think that today's Messianics should commemorate the resurrection of Yeshua?

Honoring the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah is something entirely appropriate for men and women of faith. The Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14 testify, "if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Messiah has been raised; and if Messiah has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." **Yeshua's resurrection is the most important event to our Biblical faith.** As the Messianic movement has grown, and many non-Jewish Believers have stopped celebrating Easter and instead started remembering Passover, there is still undeniably a desire to want to remember Yeshua's resurrection sometime during the week of Passover and Unleavened Bread. *There is nothing wrong or*

^a CHALOT, 294.

^b For a brief examination of this issue, consult the article "The Last Supper and the Passover" in the *Archaeological Study Bible*, p 1611.

reprehensible about this. How we learn to do this as a developing faith community, may be a bit of a challenge, though.

Those who follow the Saddusaical reckoning for the counting of the *omer* believe the answer is very straightforward. Interpreting “the day after the sabbath” (Leviticus 23:15) as being the weekly Sabbath on which the sheaf of firstfruits was to be waved before the Lord, it would seem pretty easy to connect this with Yeshua’s Sunday morning resurrection, Yeshua being the firstfruits raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). The early Church must have mixed up this “firstfruits” commemoration with some errant practices that later became “Easter.” Connecting a Sunday sheaf waving to Yeshua’s resurrection is fairly easy for Christians, who currently celebrate Easter Sunday, to understand.^c

Not all Messianics are convinced, however, that the Biblical and historical data supports the Saddusaical reckoning of the counting of the *omer*, and believe that it would be more appropriate to honor Yeshua’s resurrection not on a specific day of the week like Sunday—but instead closer to the actual date it would have taken place. Remembering Yeshua’s resurrection on any day of the week adjacent to Passover may not be very palatable for some of today’s Christians, but it has a significant precedent in the annals of early Church history. The Quartodecimans were a major sector of the Second-Fourth Century Church, present in Asia Minor, who commemorated the resurrection of Yeshua three days after the Jewish Passover, claiming to follow a tradition handed down to them by the Apostle John. Once the Synagogue came out with the official date for the Passover, the Quartodecimans followed suit. **It was not irregular for them to commemorate Yeshua’s resurrection on *any* day of the week**, versus the Roman Church that insisted on the first Sunday after the Spring equinox.^d

Today’s emerging Messianic movement, in the short term, is likely to see some variance in regard to how Yeshua’s resurrection should be commemorated. Those following the Saddusaical reckoning of counting the *omer* are likely to hold some kind of firstfruits/Resurrection Sunday service. Those adhering to a Quartodeciman style approach could hold some kind of prayer service or other commemoration three days following 14 Nisan. A fair approach to whatever position one holds is to focus on the broad themes of Yeshua’s Last Supper, His betrayal and arrest, His beating and humiliation, His crucifixion, and His resurrection in teaching and preaching during this season. We should maintain our attention on *these events* (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:2), and not try to pick apart on which days these events “must” have taken place, as though prophetic fulfillment is contingent on some kind of a Twenty-First Century binary thinking of 0s and 1s.

What the Messianic movement does in the long term is likely to be contingent on further studies that are conducted in the Gospels, and a renewed appreciation for a traditionally Jewish approach to the appointed times.

^c This point of view is explained more thoroughly by Zola Levitt, *The Seven Feasts of Israel* (Dallas: Zola Levitt Ministries, 1979), pp 6-8.

^d Consult “Quartodecimans,” in Bercot, 547; “Paschal Controversy,” in *Ibid.*, pp 500-501.

KOSHER YOUR PLATE

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

It is my intention to bring our Messianic cooks timely recipes of interest in each issue of the OIM News. In this issue, I have included two of our favorite foods for Passover!

Grilled Passover Lamb

4-5 pound boned Leg of Lamb

Prepare a boned Leg of Lamb for cooking by soaking it in salt water so that all the blood is drained out. Open up the meat so it is flat like a steak. You may cook it in one piece, or cut it in two. Rub garlic salt and pepper on the meat to your taste. Grill over an open flame until it is cooked to your liking. Our family cooks over a gas grill outdoors.

When cooked, serve with your Passover Meal!

Macaroons

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Baker's Grated Coconut
2 tablespoons flour
3 egg whites
1/3 cup sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon almond extract

Combine coconut, sugar, flour & salt. Stir in egg whites & extract. Mix well. Drop from teaspoon onto lightly greased baking sheets. Bake at 325 degrees for 25 minutes, or until brown. Remove from baking sheets at once. Makes 2 dozen!

Please submit your recipes to Margaret Huey at the OIM office for inclusion in this column and our upcoming cookbook "Kosher Your Plate."