

St. Peter's Passover Seder

[We all have a part to play! Please BOO and HISS when Pharaoh's name is mentioned and CLAP and CHEER when Moses' name is mentioned.]

Jeannette: The Passover is a time of remembrance of the trials of Moses and the Jewish people in Egypt. It is a time of celebration that God saved them. And finally, it is a promise of the future.

In the month before Passover, homes are very carefully cleaned, removing all foods with leaven. On the night before Passover, it is the custom to search for hidden crumbs by candlelight and to use a feather to clean out the leaven or hametz (KHUH-mitz). Some families burn a little bit of bread to symbolically get rid of all the hametz, which also represents puffed-up thoughts and pride.

[People with feathers or dust rags and candles search for any leaven.]

Pam: Before you is the Seder plate. Seder means "order." The foods on the plate are symbols of the experiences of ancient days. The Passover Seder is a celebration of welcome, of family and friends coming together in gratitude to God. The door is open. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are alone come and join the family. Let all who are curious come and see how we celebrate our gratitude to God. And let the prophet Elijah enter and drink a cup of wine too.

[Begin the Passover Seder.]

Fr. Jeff: **[Fr. Jeff washes his hands.]**

The First Cup of Wine (The Cup of Sanctification):

Fr. Jeff: **[Fr. Jeff blesses the wine. People drink a sip of wine.]** Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu). You created the fruit of the vine.

Pam: We put the special Seder plate at the center of the table. On it we place the symbols of Passover, including maror (horseradish), the bitter herb that reminds us of the bitterness of slavery. The salt water symbolizes the tears shed over slavery. The egg represents new life. The shank bone of a lamb symbolizes the lamb eaten before fleeing Egypt. The parsley represents the lowly origins of the Jewish people. We also set aside three special pieces of matzoh.

Suzie: This is the story of Passover. It is designed to satisfy the needs of four different types of people: the wise one, who wants to know the technical details; the wicked one, who excludes himself (and learns the penalty for doing so); the simple one, who needs to know the basics; and the one who is unable to ask, who doesn't even know enough to know what he needs to know.

Olivia: Why is this night different from all other nights?

Jeannette: [1,200 years BCE] God chose Moses to go to Pharaoh, the leader of the Egyptians, and say, “It is wrong to keep anyone in slavery. Let my people go!” But Pharaoh refused.

God sent down plagues to frighten the Egyptians so Pharaoh would obey. As we recite each plague, we take a drop out of our cups of wine or juice with our pinkie fingers because we should not enjoy a full cup while others suffer. First God turned the rivers to blood so the fish died and the water was spoiled – no one could drink. God sent thousands of frogs to creep through the land, then lice to itch, and swarming gnats to torment the people. God sent a sickness that killed the cattle. God made boils break out on everyone’s skin. Hail and lightning destroyed the trees and crops, and locusts ruined whatever growing things were left. And as if that were not enough, God sent a thick darkness that covered the land for three days. With each plague, Pharaoh promised to free the Jews. But when the plague was over, Pharaoh went back on his word and said no.

Finally, God sent a tenth plague, the worst of all. God sent down the Angel of Death to kill the firstborn son of every Egyptian family. It was the night of the Jews’ spring holiday, when every family sacrificed a lamb to God. Moses told the Jews: “Dip a leafy branch in the lambs’ blood and sprinkle a few drops on your door posts. That way the Angel of Death will recognize you and **pass over** your houses and not kill your children.” And the Jews did, and the Angel of Death passed over their houses.

Pam: Meanwhile, Pharaoh was awakened in the middle of the night by a great cry. When he saw what had happened, when he heard the Egyptians in every house shouting and weeping for their children, he told the Jews: “Go. Your God is too strong for me. Leave Egypt this very night and be gone by morning.”

The Jews packed their things in a tremendous hurry and sped from Egypt, following Moses into the wilderness. God showed the way, leading them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

But back in Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind again. He sent his army to bring the Jews back and make them slaves once more. The Jews had just reached the shores of the Red Sea when the Egyptian army overtook them. They could not bear to return to slavery. But how could they escape with the sea before them? There seemed no way out.

God told Moses to raise his hand, and as he did a miraculous thing happened. The waters parted, and the Jews passed safely through a path of dry ground in the Red Sea, with high walls of water glistening on either side. When the Egyptian soldiers tried to follow on their horses, the glistening walls of water tumbled over them and they sank to the bottom and drowned.

At last the Jews were safe. In the years they spent in the desert with Moses they learned how to be a community, living with just laws and treasuring freedom.

Delaney: On all other nights we eat either bread or matzoh. Why tonight do we eat only matzoh?

Colleen: When Pharaoh ordered the Jews to be gone by morning, they were in such a rush that they couldn’t even wait for the dough to rise. They just grabbed it and fled. Later, it baked in the hot desert sun and became the flat crackers we call matzoh. At the Seder, we eat matzoh to

taste what our ancestors ate on their flight. Even though it is flat and hard and called “the bread of affliction,” or sorrow, we eat it with joy. It is the bread of freedom too.

Cooper): On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. Why tonight do we eat only Maror, the bitter herbs?

Gideon: We eat the Maror (horseradish) because it was so bitter being slaves. The work was long and hard, and the masters were cruel. But most bitter of all, we were not our own people -- - we could not live and work as we pleased. Now our freedom feels more precious as we remember and taste the bitterness where it began.

We eat the Maror along with the Haroset on the Seder plate – the nuts, apples, honey and juice mixed together. Haroset tastes sweet, like the sweetness of hope, but it looks like the mortar the Jews used between the bricks while in Egypt.

Delaney: On all other nights we eat parsley or greens without dipping them into anything. Why tonight do we dip them twice into salt water?

Mia: First we dip the parsley, which reminds us of spring and hope, into salt water to taste the salty tears the slaves shed. Then, we dip the parsley a second time to remember the Angel of Death passing over our houses.

[Dip parsley twice.]

Cooper: On all other nights we eat either sitting up or reclining. Why tonight do we all recline?

AJ: When we were slaves in Egypt we worked all day, through years of pain and weariness, never a moment to rest. Now we can feast together as free men and women and children and lean back and eat the good things at the Seder. We recline to show we are no longer slaves.

The Second Cup of Wine (The Cup of Praise)

Fr. Jeff: [Fr. Jeff blesses the wine. People drink a sip of wine.] Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu), creator of the fruit of the vine: Grant that we who share this wine, which gladdens our hearts, may share forever the new life of the true vine. *Amen*.

[Adults: Matzoh should already be hidden. Children should now hunt for the matzoh. No kids in your home? Sit back and watch the commotion as the kids search for the missing matzoh. A kid at heart? Join with some others to celebrate the Seder Passover.]

Fr. Jeff: [Fr. Jeff notices that some matzoh is missing. Who has it? Where is it?]

Fr. Jeff: [Bless matzoh] Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu) , who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to eat unleavened bread. *Amen*.

Fr. Jeff: [Bless bitter herbs (horseradish).] Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu), who has sanctified us with the commandments and commanded us to eat bitter herbs. *Amen.*

Fr. Jeff: Now our family eats a festive dinner.

[People eat sandwich of matzoh, bitter herbs, and Haroset (which represents the mortar from the building labors of the Hebrew slaves).]

The Third Cup of Wine (The Cup of Redemption)

Fr. Jeff: [Bless the wine. People drink a sip of wine.] Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu), who created the fruit of the vine. *Amen.*

Fr. Jeff: [Fr. Jeff pours a cup of wine for Elijah.] According to the ancient Jewish tradition, the prophet Elijah did not die; he simply ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot and vanished. The belief grew that someday Elijah would return to earth, and as the forerunner of the Messiah he would prepare the way for a great Age of Peace.

Fr. Jeff: [Fr. Jeff blesses the wine. People drink a sip of the wine.] Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu), who created the fruit of the vine.

The Fourth Cup of Wine (The Cup of Acceptance) Amen.

Fr. Jeff: [Grace after meal.] Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe (Baruch atta adonai elohenu). You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us. For yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, now and forever. *Amen.*

All:

This is the power of Passover.

This is the lesson of history.

L'shana ha-ba'a bi-Yerushala'yim!

Next Year in Jerusalem!

Fr. Jeff: As the Seder ends, we remember the Greeks who came to Philip, with a request. Philip and Andrew then told Jesus about the request. The people asked, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus."