

## **An Introduction to ‘A Virtual Passover’**

Since the frightful night in Egypt over 3,000 years ago when ancient Israel spread blood from the sacrificial lamb on their lintels and doorposts to the present day, Passover has carried major significance to Jews throughout the world. But Passover also has much significance in the traditions of Christians and Latter-day Saints. This introduction will first recount the history of Passover and then highlight what it means to Jews, Christians, and Latter-day Saints. After reading this, you are invited to experience, virtually, a Passover Seder and learn more about specific aspects of Passover.

### ***The Primary Elements and Symbols of Passover***

When the Lord instructed Moses on how to observe the first Passover preparatory to the exodus from Egypt, He was clear that the focal point of Passover was the slaying of the Paschal lamb, the lamb sacrificed especially for Passover.

And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover.<sup>1</sup>

The connection between the Paschal lamb and Passover was so strong that God, Moses, and many others through history have often used the terms *Paschal lamb* and *the Passover* interchangeably.<sup>2</sup> The blood of this lamb, which was spread over the Israelites' doorways, was a sign to the destroying angel that the household be passed over and the firstborn not destroyed. In this way, the blood of the Paschal lamb was “a token upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 12:1, 3, 5-7, 11

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 12:21

houses”<sup>3</sup> of the covenant between each Israelite and their God, a covenant in which Israelites promised obedience and the Lord promised deliverance and redemption. Although the Israelites symbolically entered this covenant the moment they killed the Paschal lamb and put its blood on their houses, they did not receive all the commandments until they reached Mount Sinai.

The verses above voice the directives issued by God pertaining to the manner and importance of observing the focal ordinance that was to be the center of a new annual festival. However, God further instructed that the Israelites were also commanded to “eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”<sup>4</sup> He thus introduced two additional items that were to be an integral part of the Passover celebration – unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Finally, God commanded the Israelites to use the Passover festival to remember what he was about to do for them.

And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread [Passover]; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the Israelites were given a commandment to annually remember what their God did for them in bringing them out of slavery and redeeming them to their lands of inheritance. To help them, God instructed them to do three things. First they were to slay the Paschal lamb as a sacrifice and memorial to their own redemption; second, they were to refrain from partaking of anything leavened for seven days, beginning on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, Nisan; and third, they were to eat bitter herbs with the roasted lamb and unleavened bread. Because God explicitly commanded these four things – the Paschal lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and remembrance – they naturally became the core of Passover observance.

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<sup>3</sup> Exodus 12:13

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 12:8

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 12:17, 26-27

## *The Beginnings of Change*

Almost immediately, Passover began to evolve into a celebration that conformed to the circumstances of those commanded to observe it. Only one year after the children of Israel left Egypt, while they were camped in the wilderness of Sinai, they were again commanded to keep the Passover. However, there were several men, who because they had come in contact with a dead body, were ritually defiled and could not keep the Passover at the appointed time. Upon inquiring of God as to what to do, Moses received the following instructions:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.<sup>6</sup>

One of the unmistakable commandments regarding the celebration of Passover was that it was to be held annually by every generation forever. This is reflected in today's Haggadah, or narrative text of the Passover Seder, by the exclamation:

In every generation each individual is bound to regard himself as if he personally had gone forth from Egypt, as it is commanded, 'And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, this is on account of what the Eternal did for me when I went forth from Egypt.'<sup>7</sup> It was not our ancestors alone whom the Most Holy, blessed be He, redeemed from Egypt, but us also did He redeem with them, as it is written, 'And He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers.'<sup>8</sup>

Despite this directive, there is only explicit record of Passover being kept twice by the Israelites between the time of their liberation from Egypt and their arrival in Canaan.<sup>9</sup> However, this is not to assume that the Israelites did not keep the Passover while in their wanderings. It is clear that the Israelites took with them "flocks, and herds, even very much cattle"<sup>10</sup> when they left Egypt, yet they were fed by manna and quails miraculously

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<sup>6</sup> Numbers 9:10-11

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 13:8

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 6:23

<sup>9</sup> The first was one year after their departure from Egypt (Numbers 9) and the second was just before they entered Canaan while camped in Gilgal (Joshua 5).

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 12:38

provided by God. Could not these flocks and herds spoken of been used for sacrifice at Passover and other occasions? Indeed, we know that there were sacrifices were performed at the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

Upon their settlement in Canaan, there again exists a lengthy void of information concerning Passover observance. Aside from a brief observation that Solomon kept Passover, the first explicit evidence of a Passover observance collectively by the Israelites occurred during the reign of Hezekiah. Once again, this does not suggest a complete void of Passover observance, but given the limitations of record keeping in that day, it is conceivable that only notable celebrations were recorded and not the perpetual family and/or community commemorations.<sup>11</sup> In fact, every time a Passover observance is cited in the Tanach with only one exception,<sup>12</sup> it co-occurs with the building, rebuilding, or rededication of the Temple. However, it is fair to conclude that there were some periods of time in which many of the children of Israel were not observing the Passover as they had been commanded to. But with the continuous presence of prophets and a core group of righteous families, it would be too extreme to argue that the Israelites ever completely forsook the practice.

### ***From a Local to a Temple Sacrifice and Celebration***

When God instituted the Passover sacrifice with the Israelites, it was clearly a sacrifice that was to be centered around the homes of the people. While in Egypt, they had no central gathering place like the Tabernacle, or later, the Temple in Jerusalem. Even in the wilderness, it is not likely that all Passover sacrifices were performed at the Tabernacle, even though the Tabernacle was built before the first Passover outside of Egypt was celebrated. Yet, by the time of the Roman occupation over a thousand years later, tradition had developed to the point that it was unacceptable in the eyes of many to perform the Passover sacrifices anywhere but at the Temple in Jerusalem. For example, the Talmud records that during the first half of the first century C.E., King Agrippa ordered the high priests to count the number of kidneys left over from the Paschal offerings at the Temple in Jerusalem. They counted 600,000 pairs. Using the formula of one lamb per ten people, that would make approximately six million people gathered around or within the courtyards of the Temple for Passover. A similar report was made to Emperor Nero only a decade or two later as recorded in Josephus' *Jewish Wars*. This time,

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, 2 Kings 23:22 and 2 Chronicles 35:18 suggest that there were some Passover observances during the period of the judges and the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah that are not specifically mentioned.

<sup>12</sup> The only exception was the celebration recorded while the Israelites were encamped in Gilgal (Joshua 5) just prior to entering Canaan.

there were 256,000 kidneys counted, accounting for over two and a half million people in Jerusalem gathered to the Temple for Passover.<sup>13</sup>

So how did this change take place if never at any time did God give the Israelites further instructions concerning where the Paschal lamb was to be sacrificed?

### ***Solomon Establishes a New Precedence***

The biblical record provides clues to this question. First, one may learn from the narrative that after establishing themselves in the land of Canaan, the Israelites were ruled by a series of judges. They were divided into tribal lands of inheritance based on which son of Jacob they were descended from. Thus they were not a cohesive, unified nation, but rather a loose confederacy of tribes. This did not happen until the era of the kings, beginning with Saul and David. It was during this era that Solomon, David's son, erected a temple to God. Although the Temple was only one of several projects undertaken by Solomon to unify and solidify the kingdom – others included the building of his palace, a navy, and the restructuring of tribal lands – it immediately came to symbolize the foundation of a unified Israelite nation.

The completion of Solomon's Temple c. 950 B.C.E. marks the beginning of the transition from the Paschal sacrifice centered around the home and the sacrifice centered around the Temple. Although it is unclear whether all of Israel offered their Paschal sacrifice at the Temple in Solomon's day, it is clear that Solomon at least did, as the Chronicler states:

Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the Lord on the altar of the Lord, which he had built...according to the commandment of Moses, on the Sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Solomon appears to set a precedence with his Paschal sacrifices at the Temple. However, it is not until after the division of the kingdom, during the reign of Hezekiah, king of the southern kingdom of Judah, that we begin to see this precedence really take hold.

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<sup>13</sup> Levy, Isaac. *A Guide to Passover* (London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1958) 25

<sup>14</sup> 2 Chronicles 8:12-13

### ***Hezekiah Centralizes Passover at the Temple***

Hezekiah's rule (late eighth – early seventh century B.C.E.) was characterized by widespread reform. It should be recalled that during his reign, the northern kingdom of Israel, in the depths of apostasy, was conquered and scattered by the Assyrians. Furthermore, prior to Hezekiah, the kingdom of Judah had also fallen into some apostasy of idol worship under the reign of Ahaz. Among other things, Ahaz “made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen” (i.e. – he offered his son in a heathen sacrifice).<sup>15</sup> He “took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.”<sup>16</sup> He “made also molten images for Baalim.”<sup>17</sup> And finally, he “sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.”<sup>18</sup> Overall, Ahaz's actions are summed up in the words of the Chronicler, “[He] transgressed sore against the Lord. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is king Ahaz.”<sup>19</sup> Under such extreme idolatry and persecution, and especially with the closure of the Temple, it would not have been possible for the Jews to be sacrificing the Paschal lamb at the Temple. Any Passover observance, at least in the way God had commanded it, would have been forced “underground” during these circumstances.

Therefore, when Hezekiah came to the throne with the aim of reforming the kingdom and returning to the true worship of God, his task of reinstating the Passover full-scale must have seemed daunting in the least. It is likely that he would have spent a great deal of time and effort trying to decide on a plan that would motivate a vast number of Jews to participate in Passover observance. The Chronicler is careful to note that he “had taken counsel (possibly with Isaiah, his contemporary), and his princes, and all the congregation of Jerusalem.”<sup>20</sup> It is also likely that he would have seen Passover as an opportunity to unify his people after the destructive reign of Ahaz. Thus, he ultimately decided to have this Passover celebration not only mark the wholesale reinstatement of the most important Jewish festival, but also mark the reopening of the Temple, an extremely important symbolic gesture of reform that is found again centuries later in the story of Chanukah.

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3

<sup>16</sup> 2 Kings 16:8; 2 Chronicles 28:21

<sup>17</sup> 2 Chronicles 28:2

<sup>18</sup> 2 Chronicles 28:23-24

<sup>19</sup> 2 Chronicles 28:19, 22

<sup>20</sup> 2 Chronicles 30:2

Hezekiah's decision to have his people gather to the Temple for a national celebration of Passover effectively transformed the emotional and psychological approach of Jews to Passover. It went from a celebration where the Paschal sacrifice could be done wherever the Levites could be found, to a celebration where the Paschal sacrifice was centered in the Temple. In the process, it also transformed Passover into a celebration that more fervently expressed nationalistic zeal. As this nationalism grew, Passover became more and more focused on the themes of liberation and birth of the nation, and less focused on what brought about those miracles – the Paschal sacrifice.

### ***Josiah Solidifies Passover as a Temple-Centered Festival***

After Hezekiah, subsequent events and rulers exhibited the pattern of apostasy and disruption of Passover observance followed by reformation and an increase in the centralization of Passover at the Temple as a nationalistic celebration. For example, in the fifty-seven years after his death, the Jews again turned to idolatry under Manasseh and Amon. Like Ahaz before them, Manasseh and Amon “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen.”<sup>21</sup> Then, when Josiah came to the throne he began a thorough reformation in which he “began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.”<sup>22</sup>

Once this was accomplished, Josiah turned his attention to the Temple at Jerusalem. He sent several men to “repair the house of the Lord his God.”<sup>23</sup> In the process of cleansing and repairing the Temple, the high priest, Hilkiah, found the book of the law and gave it to Josiah. Upon having the book read to him, Josiah rent his clothes, lamenting the fact that “our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.”<sup>24</sup> The degree to which the Jews had fallen into apostasy and not kept the commandment to keep the Passover is demonstrated by the fact that they were not even prepared to celebrate it. Josiah had to give the people

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Kings 21:2; 2 Chronicles 33:2; for further examples of Manasseh's and Amon's evil doing, read the entire chapters here cited.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:3

<sup>23</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:8

<sup>24</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:21

“of the flock, lambs, and kids, all for the Passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks.”<sup>25</sup>

Following the pattern of Hezekiah, Josiah held the Passover sacrifices at the Temple to mark its reopening. In fact, it is at this Passover that a detailed description is first given of how the priests were to perform the sacrifices at the Temple.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, a gathering and celebration of this magnitude would have restored the levels of national fervor at least to what they were in the days of Hezekiah.

It was not long after Josiah's death in about 609 B.C.E. that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon obliterated Jerusalem and the Temple. This destruction meant devastation and dispersion of the Jews. However, it was not long before Persia conquered a weakened Babylon and Jerusalem came under the rule of Cyrus the Great. Great joy swept through the ranks of Jews abroad when Cyrus decreed the rebuilding of the Temple. Once the Temple was rebuilt under the direction of Zerubbabel, the Passover was once again kept with a great celebration. The scriptural record is again clear that the Paschal sacrifices took place at the Temple.

For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.<sup>27</sup>

After this celebration, there is no further record of the Jews observing Passover until the Roman domination, but given the enormity of gatherings during the Roman occupation, it may safely be assumed that Passover observance continued unbroken so that it eventually became the massive pilgrim festival that we read about in the Talmud, the Christian Gospels, and the historical account of Josephus.

At this point in time, Jews had been sacrificing the Paschal lamb at the Temple as a nation for so long that nationalistic fervor had become an inseparable part of the festivities. In addition, Rabbinical interpretation of Numbers 9:10, which commands the Israelites who are unclean or “in a journey afar off” to keep the Passover the following month, made it clear that it was unacceptable to offer up the Paschal sacrifice anywhere but at the Temple. For example, in the Mishnah, Rabbi Akiva identifies “a journey afar off” as beyond Modiith (or Modine), or like distance from the Temple, but Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Jose argue that it is only beyond the threshold of the Temple. This would indicate that they viewed any sacrifice outside of the Temple grounds as

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<sup>25</sup> 2 Chronicles 35:7

<sup>26</sup> 2 Chronicles 35:2-6, 10-16

<sup>27</sup> Ezra 6:20



unacceptable so that the sacrificer would have to come to the Temple the following month to keep the Passover as commanded.<sup>28</sup>

These multitudinous gatherings at the Temple for Passover were finally abolished in one mitigating blow when the Romans descended on Jerusalem in 70 C.E. with full force and razed the city. With the eradication of the Temple, the Jews were left without a place to perform their sacrifices. They were also stripped of the prime symbol of their nationhood. In this way, the possibility of Jews gathering for Passover celebrations as a nation, an event that had developed into the core expression of Jewish nationalism, was indefinitely severed.

Although the Jews were stripped of their nation and could no longer offer the Paschal sacrifice according to tradition at the Temple, they continued to celebrate Passover the best they could, but without the most important of the four original cores of Passover – the Paschal sacrifice. As a result, the other remaining cores of Passover (i.e. – the Paschal lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and remembrance) rose in significance. This was eventually manifested in two ways: 1) Passover became, once again, a home-based ceremony, which over time became regularized, ritualized, and eventually even somewhat secularized as a commemoration of a historical event that served as an explanatory model for all generations of Jews;<sup>29</sup> and 2) The central and most important symbol of Passover, the Paschal lamb, was superceded by the unleavened bread, or matzah.

### ***Unleavened Bread Supercedes the Paschal Lamb***

There is little debate that the unleavened bread has come to supercede the Paschal lamb in its importance to Passover. As Ruth Fredman succinctly observes, “In moving the ceremony indoors [from the Temple to the home], the sacrifice was replaced as the main symbol of the ritual by the matzah.”<sup>30</sup> It might be added that the Afikomen in particular became the predominant figure of Passover, even to the extent that it was eaten at the particular point in the Seder previously reserved for eating the last remnant of the roasted lamb.

So why exactly did this happen? First, it must remember that Passover is referred to by two names or related feasts – the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It has already been established that

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<sup>28</sup> *Mishnah*, Pesachim 9:2

<sup>29</sup> Fredman, Ruth. *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995) 95-96

<sup>30</sup> Fredman, Ruth. *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995) 3

Passover and the Paschal lamb/offering are synonymous. With the cessation of the sacrifices in the Temple came a vacuum of sorts in Passover symbolism and ritual that needed filling. As the two related feasts, or names listed above would suggest, unleavened bread was the logical successor. It had been a dominant item in Passover since its inception and God himself had explicitly commanded its use. Additionally, it reminded the Jews of the suddenness of their redemption, for they did not have time to let their bread rise, but instead had to let it bake on their backs. Like with the sudden redemption from Egypt, the Jews found themselves suddenly and devastatingly ousted from their homeland, still a distinct people, but now figurative wanderers in the wilderness of the Diaspora.

The Christian Gospels and other historical documents of the era also offer insight into why at this time the primary symbol of Passover shifted to unleavened bread. It is clear that at the time Jesus declared himself to be the long-awaited Messiah, the Jews were not looking for just a spiritual deliverer, but for a physical deliverer like Moses, who would free them from Roman rule. This, among other reasons, was chief in their rejecting Jesus' claims. Such fervor for physical redemption from Rome was not only manifested in the Jews' and Romans' attitude toward and treatment of Jesus, but also in later military rebellions such as that led by Bar Kokba, who even convinced the great Rabbi Akiva that he was the chosen one who would restore Jewish solidarity and free them from Roman oppression.

The significance of this mindset in relation to Passover is immense. Because Jews of all generations have applied the themes of Passover to their own circumstances, it is plausible that the Jews of the first and second centuries C.E. would have been more focused on the physical deliverance of their ancestors as represented by the unleavened bread than their spiritual deliverance from the idolatry of Pharaoh as represented by the Paschal lamb.

The nature of the Paschal sacrifice when contrasted with the social and political upheaval of the time also contributed to this shift in primary symbol. The Paschal sacrifice was, in its own right, a highly sacred peace offering. The peace offering was the third of three general types of sacrifices made at the Temple – the other two are the sin or trespass offering and the burnt offering. Done in order, these sacrifices represent the atonement, sanctification, and fellowship with God of the sacrificer. Thus the peace offering implies an existing peace with God and is offered to obtain the further enjoyment of that relationship. However, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E., the Jews were not at peace with their God. Thus, even if they could have

continued Paschal sacrifices, these offerings would have been void of the import ascribed to them in the Law of Moses. In essence, after 70 C.E., peace offerings in general, and the Paschal offering specifically, were a mute point. There was no need for them since that condition which they presupposed did not exist. Hence the way was opened for another emblem of Passover to ascend to predominance, which, as we have already discussed, was the matzah.

## Passover in Judaism Today

Why, in a modern age and civilization in which ritual among Jews is on the decline, is the Seder still vital?<sup>31</sup> This poses an interesting question that provides an invitation to investigate the nature of the Seder and its role in Jewish life today to discover why it contains such vitality in even assimilated Jews. However, we might best begin with the question of why we even need to add “in Judaism” to our section heading above. Isn’t Passover a Jewish holiday that does not need such qualification? It is true that Passover is primarily a Jewish holiday, but it is also true, and occasionally to the distress of some Jews, that other faiths, particularly Christians also observe, or at least claim a connection to Passover. These other faiths will be discussed later, but for now we will focus on the Jewish perspective on Passover in modern times.

For Jews today, Passover can take on several different meanings. For some, Passover is the embodiment of Jewish faith. For others, it has less to do with Jewish faith, and more to do with Jewish existence. Still, for others, it is simply a wonderful family tradition that is one of the oldest in the world, if not the oldest. But for many Jews since the concentration camps of World War II, Passover has become a contradiction to what they perceive as reality and even if they don’t feel the change quite to that extent, it is certain that the vast majority of Jews who survived the Holocaust now view Passover in a different light than they did prior to it.

### *Passover as the Embodiment of Jewish Faith*

The core of Jewish faith is the covenant they have with God, which makes them his chosen people. They believe firmly that he will never forsake them, but will always deliver them and take care of them. This faith, of course, has not been without its challenges, but it nevertheless remains the same for the still faithful. So where does this faith come from? What has happened in the lives of Jews that would cause such belief? Rabbi Irving Greenberg observed:

Judaism insists that history and the social-economic-political reality in which people live will eventually be perfected; much of what passes for the norm of human existence is really a deviation from the ultimate reality. How do we know this? From an actual event in history – the Exodus.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Fredman, Ruth. *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995) 1

<sup>32</sup> Greenberg, Rabbi Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988) 34

Thus, from the Exodus stems the central hope and belief of Judaism; namely, that through God's intercession, mankind will eventually become free from the oppression and poverty so commonly experienced by the vast majority.

However, Greenberg further notes that God's intercession is not completely sufficient for this to happen. "The Exodus model implies that a partnership between God and humanity will carry out the transformation of the world."<sup>33</sup> Just as the Israelites in Egypt could not be saved without doing their part, i.e. – slaying the Paschal lamb and spreading its blood on their door frames – Jews today cannot expect the advent of the Messiah without first obeying and honoring their covenant with God and preparing themselves so that the third temple may be built.

But the relationship drawn by Greenberg between God and man has even greater implications to Jewish faith. When faced with the awful question, "Where was God at Auschwitz?" Greenberg expresses what may be considered the epitome of Jewish faith in God and the ultimate expression of God's relationship with His chosen people, "God was there – starving, broken, humiliated, gassed and burned alive, sharing the infinite pain as only an infinite capacity for pain can share it. What is the message in the Divine Presence's not stopping the Holocaust despite the most desperate pleas? In effect, God was saying to humans: you stop the Holocaust."<sup>34</sup> His message to the ancient Israelites seemed to run along similar lines. Although He provided the miracles that ultimately led to their deliverance, they were required to do their part.

Therefore, we see that from Passover has sprung the roots of Jewish faith. The recounting of the past, specifically the Exodus story, in the form of the Seder not only reminds Jews of the past dealings of God with their ancestors, but it also serves as a yearly answer to the ever-persistent question of where they stand with their God whom they have covenanted with.

### ***Passover as the Embodiment of Jewish Existence***

While it is necessary and correct to point out the role of Passover in Jewish faith, it would be unfair to say that this is the only role that Passover plays in the lives of Jews, for not all Jews are what might be termed "believers." Yet Passover may still possess profound meaning and significance for even these. In fact, the role of Passover as an explanatory model or paradigm for all generations of Jewish existence may be considered a much

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. --- 36

<sup>34</sup> Greenberg, Rabbi Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988) 320-321

more universal application than it being a symbol of Jewish faith. The Haggadah states emphatically, “In every generation each individual is bound to regard himself as if he personally had gone forth from Egypt.”

The Haggadah, in a midrashic interpretation of the verses of Torah that essentially capture the essence of the story of Passover (Deuteronomy 26:5-9), states that the children of Israel were distinguished even while in Egypt. This distinction is an important theme of Passover that is played upon several times. It culminates in God’s direct command to Israel that they forsake the gods of their former oppressors and worship Him, the only true and living god. As Greenberg points out, “The most devastating effect of slavery, ultimately, is that the slave internalizes the master’s values and accepts the condition of slavery as his proper status”<sup>35</sup> and because “slavery is merely an exaggerated version of the reality endured by most human beings,”<sup>36</sup> this is a danger that is experienced by all generations of Jews. The children of Israel were to understand that they were a chosen people, a covenant people, and that they were to remain distinct from all other nations. This solidarity has been an incredible phenomenon throughout the ages and is a marquee symbol of Jewish existence and survival.

Thus the statement of the Haggadah that “in every generation each individual is bound to regard himself as if he personally had gone forth from Egypt,” explains the paradigmatic value of Passover. To this end, Monford Harris argues that the aim of the Seder, or the ritual commemoration of Passover, is to “make the generations existentially aware of the Exodus” and thereby of their existence as a Jew.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Passover as a Jewish Family Tradition***

Another possible and very simplistic reason that Passover is still vital in the lives of Jews today is that “the excitement of different foods and elaborate family get-togethers has made Passover the most popular Jewish holiday.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, Passover simply means having a good old time with the family.

This perception finds validity when the festival nature of the historic Passover is examined. Remember that dating back to Hezekiah and Josiah, Passover was a national celebration with religious and political implications. In the post-Second Temple Period, it necessarily became a family and friend community-like celebration centered

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<sup>35</sup> Greenberg, Rabbi Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988) 35

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Fredman, Ruth. *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995) 20

<sup>38</sup> Kolatch, Alfred J. *The Jewish Book of Why* (New York : J. David, 1981) 184

in the home. As with many Jewish traditions, Passover could have possibly become simply that, a tradition; albeit one that provides a good excuse for families and neighbors to get together and celebrate being Jewish. In many ways, it can be compared with the Thanksgiving dinner in America. Virtually all American families, even atheist families, have a Thanksgiving dinner. They do this not necessarily because they are grateful for God's deliverance of the Pilgrims from English monarchal rule, or because it defines them as Americans, but because it is a good excuse for their family to come together and enjoy good food and company.

### ***The Holocaust Challenge to Passover and the Fear of a Second Holocaust***

The tremendous effect that the Holocaust had on the psyche of Jews throughout the world can never be overstated. For at least one author, it is "the underlying contradiction of Passover" from which "there is no escape."<sup>39</sup>

We celebrate our ancient escape but can't forget what happened yesterday in Christian Europe when there was no escape. Uneasy lies the head that cannot explain this godly neglect – that ancient relief contrasted with this modern disaster . . . As a result, the most critical questions arise: Are we deluded? What is the true nature of God? Is there a God at all? God, it is said, created humanity: isn't it possible, instead, that humanity created God?<sup>40</sup>

This argument challenges the underlying hope and celebration of Passover – freedom at the hands of God. It is based on the premise that Passover was meant to be a celebration of past deliverance, a show of gratitude for present freedom, and an expression of hope for future redemption. However, following the argument, Passover cannot be this anymore because God has already forsaken his people. The evidence of this was the Holocaust. Whereas the prayers of the ancient Israelites were answered by liberation, many believe that the prayers of modern Jews simply fell on deaf ears or perhaps on no ears at all.

Of course, this is a stand that can be debated. Is it not true that the Nazis were defeated and the Jews ultimately freed? It is possible to conclude that, just as with ancient Israel, God worked on his own timetable and did not deliver those in the concentration camps until he felt the time was right. It should also be considered that the Jews in the concentration camps were liberated after a decade of slavery, while the Israelites suffered at the

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<sup>39</sup> Certner, Andrew. "Passover: The Underlying Contradiction." *Humanistic Journalism* (25, 1997) 55

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

hands of their Egyptian taskmasters for centuries before they were liberated. Viewed in this light, liberation from the concentration camps came relatively quickly, though it certainly seemed like an eternity to those in the camps. Furthermore, in contrast to the argument that God should have prevented the Holocaust, it may be pointed out that God did not prevent the ancient Israelites' slavery in Egypt. In fact, it could be argued that he himself was responsible for delivering them into Pharaoh's hands; yet he was praised for delivering them in the end.

Still, the above-stated concerns are expressive of a very widespread fear among Jews today of experiencing a second holocaust, this time spiritual. The threat of such an occurrence comes from many areas, the most dangerous, perhaps, coming from within the Jewish communities themselves. For example, upon attending an Orthodox feminist Seder at the liberal arts college she was attending, Wendy Shalit related her horror at the way the Jewish women conducting the Seder had completely altered it into what she claimed was not a Seder at all. When she voiced her concern to the Jewish Association, she was told that she was overreacting, that it was not a big deal.

And there, it seemed to me, lay the danger: the slow erosion, by the combined forces of political correctness and the spirit of free-swinging deconstruction, of whatever could be legitimately thought of as the core of Judaism.<sup>41</sup>

Considering the danger posed today by internal strife, it is interesting that Passover vehemently warns against the outside threats (i.e. – the Pharaohs and Hitlers of the world) yet barely mentions the most dangerous threat of all – the one that comes from one's own family. As the Haggadah points out briefly, "Pharaoh decreed the destruction of the males only, while Laban [Jacob's father-in-law] designed to root out the whole, as it is said, 'A Syrian had nearly caused my father to perish.'"

This concern over an internal holocaust is further punctuated by the irony of Passover being used as a tool to destroy Judaism. Passover, in fact, has long been a source of irony for Jews. We have discussed how the central message of Passover today is the past, present, and future redemption of the Jews. However, history has taught us that Passover has often been a time of death, sorrow, and captivity for the Jews. Steven Weitzman provided an in-depth study of this phenomenon. His conclusion offers a rebuttal to the prevailing thought of the day.

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<sup>41</sup> Shalit, Wendy. "A Feminist Seder." *Commentary* (99:1, 1995) 74



Long before Durkheim, communal rituals like festivals were thought to promote social unity and cohesion, to generate feelings of amity, and to foster cooperation and generosity. Many still believe this to be the case, many experience it through their own ritual practice, but recent scholars have come to recognize that ritual can also be a turbulent, divisive moment in a community's life, sparking protest, confrontation, even the full-scale riot.<sup>42</sup>

Weitzman's observation that communal rituals like Passover can often result in disharmony and violence is well supported by history. Consider the many revolts, protests, and slaughters, like the Bar Kokba revolt, that took place in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., each time being associated with Passover. Then in the Middle Ages, countless Jews suffered from the regular violent outbursts by Orthodox Christians brought on by the ominous blood libel accusations. In more recent times, Palestinian suicide bombers have used Passover to target large gatherings in order to more effectively carry out their evil terrorist designs.

### ***Importance of Passover in Judaism Today***

In summation, the Seder is still a vital part of Jewish life as the most observed festival because of several key factors. First, it embodies Jewish faith and the Orthodox sees its observance as an act of the faithful. Second, it provides an answer to, or at least an awareness of the question of what it means to be Jewish. Lastly, it is simply a firmly-rooted family tradition. It is a time for Jewish families to join together and have an exciting, unusual evening. Virtually all Jews see Passover in at least one of these lights, sometimes in combinations of lights.

Yet, despite the positive light that is usually cast on Passover, there will always remain the ominous darkness of the Holocaust. Ever persistent in the minds of Jews, the Holocaust causes each individual to carefully examine what Passover means to himself or herself. For some it strengthens their faith, for others like Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust destroys all hope and faith. For many Jews today, Passover may also carry a warning of a future holocaust of an even more destructive nature than that already experienced.

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<sup>42</sup> Weitzman, Steven. "From Feasts into Mourning: The Violence of Early Jewish Festivals." *The Journal of Religion* (79, 1999) 545

## Passover in Christianity

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth and substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law, typified by all the lambs for sacrifice, and by him they had all their efficacy. The paschal lamb was an eminent type of him. 'For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.' (1 Corinthians 1:7)<sup>43</sup>

Herein lies a fundamental belief of Christianity regarding the Passover. The basis for this belief stems back to Jesus' teachings that he had come to the earth to fulfill the Law of Moses as the promised Messiah.<sup>44</sup> In such a light, Christians see Jesus as the true Paschal lamb and his death as the fulfillment of centuries of sacrificing.

### *Jesus as the Paschal Lamb*

Jesus drew a parallel between himself and the Paschal lamb when he said to his disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."<sup>45</sup> There are several aspects of the Paschal sacrifice as recorded by Moses in the Old Testament that Christians feel relate to the suffering, death, and resurrection of their Savior. These include criteria for selecting a lamb, the manner of preparation for the sacrifice, and the manner in which the sacrifice was to be carried out.

#### *Criteria for selecting the lamb*

The first criterion for selecting a Paschal lamb was that it be "without blemish."<sup>46</sup> Christians correlate this criterion with Jesus, whom they maintain was sinless and therefore without blemish. They believe that it was only through his purity and perfection that he was qualified to fulfill Isaiah's great description of the Messiah:

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened

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<sup>43</sup> Hutchinson, Aaron. *The Passover and Sprinkling of Blood kept through Faith* (Boston: Thomas and John Fleet, 1774) 3

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 5:17-18

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 26:2

<sup>46</sup> Exodus 12:5

not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.<sup>47</sup>

The second criterion for selecting a Paschal lamb was that it be “a male of the first year.”<sup>48</sup> Christians do not believe that this means that the Messiah was to be sacrificed in his first year, but that this qualification was figurative for the Messiah. Because the first year of a lamb’s life constitutes its prime, Christians feel that the Christ was to be sacrificed, or killed in the prime of his life. For humans, this is typically thought to be in the early thirties. Jesus was crucified at the prime age of thirty-three, thus manifesting, according to Christian thought, the qualifications of the Paschal lamb.

#### *Preparation for the sacrifice*

One of the prescriptions concerning the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb was that it should be taken on the tenth day of Nisan and prepared until it was sacrificed by the whole congregation of Israel on the fourteenth day of Nisan.<sup>49</sup> This commandment fits nicely with the events of the last week in Jesus’ life. If the synoptic Gospel writers are accurate in placing the death of Jesus on the same day as Passover, then that would mean he entered Jerusalem triumphantly on the tenth day of Nisan. From this point on, the Gospels concentrate on his preparation for Gethsemane and the cross. For Christians, these four days of preparation equate with the four days prescribed by God for the preparing of the Paschal sacrifice.

One of the ways in which Jesus prepared was to cleanse the Temple from those who were polluting it. This cleansing of his house has direct parallels for Christians with the diligent and thorough purging of leaven from Jewish homes that occurs just prior to Passover. This is of particular interest in light of our earlier observation that Passover observance in the Hebrew Scriptures, or at least those observances found worthy of mention, was often closely associated with the cleansing and rededication of the Temple.

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<sup>47</sup> Isaiah 53:4-7

<sup>48</sup> Exodus 12:5

<sup>49</sup> Exodus 12:3, 6

### *Manner of the sacrifice*

On the night before the Exodus, it was requisite that the Israelites shed the blood of the Paschal lamb and then smear it on their doorways to cause the destroying angel to pass over their firstborn. In essence, it was the blood of the lamb that symbolically and literally gave the hope and assurance of protection from immanent death. So it is that Christians see the death of Jesus. According to Christian theology, his blood, spilt at Gethsemane and Calvary, is what offers hope and assurance of deliverance from immanent spiritual death.

Furthermore, Christians believe that this protection from spiritual death is contingent on their obedience to divine command. For the Israelites, their deliverance was also based on obedience to the command issued by God through Moses. It is clear that if any Israelite had decided that he would not heed God's command to spread the blood upon the doorway of his home, his family would have mourned the same fate as the Egyptians. It was not enough to simply make the sacrifice; each family had to use the sacrificial gift to receive the promised protection. So it is with the sacrifice of Jesus. Although the sacrifice was made for all, it will only benefit those who apply it in their lives. In this sense, the hyssop used to spread the blood upon the doorposts and lintel becomes a powerful symbol of faith to Christians. It is the applicator that is used to carry out the act of obedience.

### ***Jesus as the Pure Paschal Sacrifice***

We have already noted that the Passover meal was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.<sup>50</sup> Leaven throughout the scriptures has long been associated with impurity. Even Jesus warned his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees, associating it with hypocrisy.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, unleavened bread is a symbol of the opposite – purity. This idea of purity is presented in conjunction with the notion that only a pure lamb “without blemish” can be offered. Furthermore, it reminds Christians that only through the sacrifice of their Redeemer can they hope to be pure. The bitter herbs are reminiscent of the figurative cup to which Jesus submitted himself.<sup>52</sup> They also portray the intensity of pain and anguish experienced by Jesus as he carried out his voluntary sacrifice for mankind as well as the vinegar offered to Jesus while on the cross to ease his burning thirst.

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<sup>50</sup> Exodus 12:8

<sup>51</sup> Luke 12:1

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 26:42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11

Adding to the notion of a pure sacrifice is the stringent commandment to roast the sacrificial lamb and not to boil it or cook it by any other means. Fire has long been a symbol of the power to purge and clean something thoroughly. Jesus himself used fire-symbolism to describe the purifying effect of the gift of the Holy Ghost, a more thorough cleansing than that achieved through baptism by water. Thus, it fits nicely with Christian theology that the sacrifice be roasted with fire.

Finally, there is the commandment that no bone of the Paschal lamb should be broken.<sup>53</sup> This is of peculiar interest because of the unique circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion. Normally when the Romans crucified someone, they would break the legs of the victim to expedite the death process. In the case of Jesus, this would have been particularly important with the immanent approach of the Sabbath. However, John records that "when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs."<sup>54</sup> John further relates this fact to the commandment to not break the bones of the Paschal lamb. "For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled: A bone of him shall not be broken."<sup>55</sup>

### ***The Passover Seder and the Lord's Supper***

To fully understand how Christians relate to Passover, it must be remembered that Christianity may be seen as a religious movement that in a sense grew out of Judaism. The premise upon which it was built was that the Law of Moses had been fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and that it was therefore a dead law, having been replaced by his teachings. The Last Supper with Jesus and his apostles shows this theology better than anything else.

It is widely accepted that the Last Supper was indeed a Passover Seder that Jesus altered slightly to introduce the Lord's Supper, sometimes referred to as Holy Communion or the sacrament. In fact, anyone who takes the New Testament as a historical record must accept this fact as it is stated explicitly by the Gospel writers. Luke gives the most detailed account, noting that Jesus took a cup of wine before the meal, presumably the first cup of the Seder, and blessed it, then gave it to his apostles with the explanation that this would be the last time he would drink of the fruit of the vine in this life. Then, during the meal, or possibly at the end when the Afikomen is

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<sup>53</sup> Exodus 12:46

<sup>54</sup> John 19:33

<sup>55</sup> John 19:36; presumably, John was referring to Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; and Psalms 43:20 which contain the commandment to not break the bones of the Paschal lamb

eaten, he “took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.”<sup>56</sup> Then, when the time came to partake of the third cup of wine, sometimes referred to as the cup of redemption, Jesus “took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”<sup>57</sup>

So we have that holy, instituted ordinance fulfilled in the kingdom of God, in our gospel Passover, the holy supper of our Lord; in which we commemorate our greater deliverance by Christ from the more grievous bondage of sin, Satan, the world and the flesh.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, in the Lord’s Supper, the emblems of unleavened bread and wine take on the representation of Jesus’ flesh and blood, which was sacrificed and shed for the sins of all mankind. For Christians, just as the new law of Jesus superceded and replaced the Law of Moses, so too did the unleavened bread and wine supercede the Paschal sacrifice and bitter herbs as the primary symbols of Passover. Ironically, it was only seventy years later that an identical process began to occur within Judaism, although obviously not for the same reason. This shift has already been documented in this paper.

There is yet one more parallel to be drawn however, between Passover and the Last Supper. This item pertains to the bitter herbs. Christians believe that all things in the Law of Moses were given as a type of the Messiah, who they believe was Jesus. This includes the bitter herbs since the Israelites were explicitly commanded to eat them with the Paschal lamb. The question then is why. Some scholars have suggested that the purpose was to foreshadow the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot.<sup>59</sup> It should be recalled that according to tradition, the bitter herbs are dipped in the charoseth and eaten before the meal. In the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, Jesus identified the disciple who would betray him by revealing that it would be the one who “dippeth with me in the dish.” This he did before the meal.

Only twice during the Seder is anything dipped. The first is when the vegetable greens are dipped in salt water, and the second is when the bitter herbs are dipped in charoseth. Given the prominence of the bitter herbs, and the logical comparison of bitter herbs to betrayal, it is likely that it was at this point that Jesus identified Judas as the betrayer. Thus to some Christians, the bitter herbs are a reminder of betrayal and its bitter results.

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<sup>56</sup> Matthew 26:26; see also Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19

<sup>57</sup> Matthew 26:27-28; see also Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:20

<sup>58</sup> Hutchinson, Aaron. *The Passover and Sprinkling of Blood kept through Faith* (Boston: Thomas and John Fleet, 1774) 3

<sup>59</sup> Treseder, Terry W. “Passover Promises Fulfilled in the Last Supper” *Ensign* (April, 1990) 22

Unfortunately, the relationship drawn by Christians between the Seder and the Lord's Supper eventually led to the dreadful blood libels. Christians mistakenly confused their own ideas about the bread and water with Jewish use of the matzah and wine.<sup>60</sup> It also led to the allowance of white wine in the Seder by some rabbis and the detailed effort of many Jews to disassociate all Passover items from anything to do with Christianity. Such items included the unleavened bread, wine, and charoseth. However, as suggested by Meyer Levin, such efforts have not been completely successful.

Curiously, [the] view of the Seder as an untouchable ritual may be seen, psychologically, as perhaps a result of the link between the Passover Seder and a Christian rite. Almost everyone knows that the Last Supper was a Seder, and most Jews vaguely understand that the Catholic communion, using the wafer and the wine, transforms elements of the Passover – the matzah and the wine. By reversal, this gives Jews the impression that just as a Catholic communion is a fixed ritual, so too must be the Seder!<sup>61</sup>

### ***Passover and the Resurrection of Jesus***

Jesus' resurrection is also portrayed by the Passover in Christian eyes. Passover is a celebration of springtime, the renewal of life, and a time of gratitude for the firstfruits of the field. The symbolism here for Christians is that as the Jews celebrated the firstfruits of the field, Jesus simultaneously became the firstfruits of the dead. This is very significant in light of the emphasis placed on the physical deliverance of the Israelites from bondage. It has even been suggested that Jesus resurrected on the very day that the high priest waved before the temple altar a sheaf of barley in keeping with the command in Leviticus that the Israelites celebrate the harvest of the firstfruits.<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, the power of this symbolism is fully realized when a Christian recognizes that Jesus' death and resurrection give him the power to redeem the whole human family spiritually and physically; spiritually because

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<sup>60</sup> Levin, Meyer. *An Israel Haggadah for Passover* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, no date) 20

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Lefgren, John C. *April Sixth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980) 47; see also Leviticus 23:10-11

he took upon himself the sins of mankind, and physically because “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>63</sup>

The evidence of this association between Passover and Jesus’ resurrection may be seen in the close association between Passover and Easter. Not only do they occur close together, they also celebrate essentially the same theme –deliverance from some type of bondage. For Christians, it is the freeing of their spirits from their bodies as well as the spiritual redemption from Hell. For Jews, it is the freeing of their ancestors and themselves from slavery and oppression.

### ***Passover as an Explanatory Model for Jews and Christians***

There is yet one more way in which Christians relate to Passover. This is in the mythological comparison of Passover to the Christian existence through the generations. In other words, Christians feel, as the Jews feel, that the Passover story is a model and explanation for Christian existence spanning the generations. Often cited is the intense persecution of Christians under Roman rule until the reign of Constantine. The miraculous transformation in Roman policy toward Christians from that point on may be seen parallel to God’s deliverance of Israel from Egyptian persecution and slavery several thousand years prior. Admittedly, this is pretty much the extent to which this comparison may be drawn, mainly because Christians have not experienced the severity or number of tragedies experienced by Jews. In fact, the great irony of the comparison is that most of the tragedies experienced by Jews over the last two millennia have come at the hands of Christians – the Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, blood libels, and Holocaust all come to mind.

### ***The Role of Passover in Christianity***

In summation, Christians relate to the Passover Seder on at least four planes. First, they correlate the Paschal sacrifice with Jesus and his crucifixion. Second, they see the Lord’s Supper as an extension and replacement of the Seder, for in it, are contained the four cores of Passover – the Paschal sacrifice, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and remembrance. Third, they see the resurrection of Jesus as the actual fulfillment of the

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<sup>63</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:22



symbolic celebration for the firstfruits of the field, he being the “firstfruits of them that slept.”<sup>64</sup> Fourth, they relate to the persecution of the Jews and therefore see the Passover as a mythical explanation of their existence and faith. It is symbolism like this that caused Paul to utter, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20

<sup>65</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:7

## Passover in Latter-day Saint Tradition and Theology

To understand the relationship between Jewish, Christian, and Latter-day Saint thought regarding Passover, we must view Christian thought as a sort of intermediary step between the Jewish and Latter-day Saint views. In a broad sense, Christianity bridges the gap between the two paradigms because it is the first religion to draw the associations outlined in the previous section. In fact, we will soon see how Latter-day Saints have expanded on each of these associations. However, some aspects of the Latter-day Saint view are wholly unique, bearing threads of Jewish traditions with the addition of modern revelation.

### *The Passover Birth and Death of Jesus*

Jewish writings in conjunction with Latter-day Saint beliefs and scripture indicate that Jesus was in fact born on Passover, not on the now traditional date of December 25. According to the writings of the Jews, Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, was born on the first day of Passover and “at his birth the sun shone with unparalleled splendor, the like of which will only be seen at the time of the Messiah’s coming.”<sup>66</sup> Thus Isaac’s birth was a prototype of the Messiah’s.

Latter-day Saint scripture concurs fully with this idea, suggesting that the Messiah was indeed Jesus. According to the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite, a prophet spoken of in the Book of Mormon, one of the signs of Jesus’ birth would be that “there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before [the Messiah] cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day.”<sup>67</sup> This prophecy was fulfilled five years later as recorded, “at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came.”<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, Latter-day Saints do not believe that Jesus was born on December 25, but that he was born on April 6. This stems from a revelation received by Joseph Smith, the first prophet and president of the Church, on the date April 6, 1830 when the Church was first organized, it “being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh.”<sup>69</sup> Later comments by prophets of the Church

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<sup>66</sup> “Isaac.” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971)

<sup>67</sup> Helaman 14:3

<sup>68</sup> 3 Nephi 1:15

<sup>69</sup> D&C 20:1

have indicated that this was to be interpreted literally to the very day. This would effectually place the birth of Jesus during the traditional time frame that Passover occurs.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus also suggest that he was born during Passover. It should be recalled that Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem to be taxed according to the decree of Caesar Augustus. It would seem natural that Caesar Augustus would correlate his taxation with Passover since it is well documented that during this time millions of Jews would gather to Jerusalem for Passover. For instance, the Talmud records that King Agrippa ordered the high priests to count the number of kidneys left over from the Paschal sacrifices so that he could obtain a census of the Jews. They counted six hundred thousand pairs of kidneys suggesting the presence of six million people, with one lamb being used for ten people. Josephus writes of a similar report made to Nero. This time there were two hundred and fifty-six thousand pairs of kidneys accounting for over two and a half million people.<sup>70</sup> Such massive crowds in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas (Bethlehem is only five miles south of Jerusalem) at Passover would explain why there “was no room for [Joseph and Mary] in the inn.”<sup>71</sup> Moreover, April 6 is during the short lambing season. This would explain why the shepherds to whom the heavenly hosts appeared were “keeping watch over their flock by night.”<sup>72</sup>

The association between the crucifixion of Christ and the observance of the Passover is much better documented than that of his birth. Three out of the four Gospel writers explicitly state that Christ spent his final supper with his disciples in solemn observance of the Passover.<sup>73</sup> In addition, John records that the chief priests and Pharisees “went not into the judgment hall [of Pilate], lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.”<sup>74</sup> This of course was the day following the Passover meal celebrated by Jesus and his disciples raising the question of why there seems to be a contradiction here. Actually, a closer look at the practices of different groups of Jews shows that the supposed contradiction here is actually further support to the credibility of the records.

At that time, the practice of the Galileans, of whom Jesus was one, was to set the beginning of the day at sunrise, while those who sought to kill him (i.e. – the chief priest, Pharisees, and Sadducees) followed the custom

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<sup>70</sup> Both accounts reported in Levy, Isaac. *A Guide to Passover* (London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1958) 25

<sup>71</sup> Luke 2:7

<sup>72</sup> Luke 2:8

<sup>73</sup> Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20

<sup>74</sup> John 18:28

of the Judeans who fixed the beginning of the day at sunset.<sup>75</sup> These varying systems for reckoning days resulted in two different nights of Passover observance, a phenomenon still found today. Thus, it is almost certain that at the very time Jesus hung on the cross and died, the Judeans and those who had sought his death were at the Temple offering their Paschal sacrifices.

However, Latter-day Saint beliefs carry the analogy between Passover and the death and sacrifice of Jesus even further. One of the conspicuous characteristics on Latter-day Saint meetinghouses and temples is the absence of any representation of the cross. This may seem odd for a Christian religion but one of the reasons behind this motif is that Latter-day Saints believe that while the crucifixion of Jesus was necessary, it was actually in the Garden of Gethsemane immediately following his Passover Seder that Jesus took upon himself the sins of the human family. It is through Latter-day Saint scripture that we learn that while in Gethsemane, Jesus bled from every pore.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, it was specifically the immense blood spilt in the Garden of Gethsemane that Latter-day Saints feel represents the blood spread by the Israelites on their doorways.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane took place on the first night of Passover observance and his crucifixion took place leading up to the second night of Passover observance. Given the Latter-day Saint view that the primary portion of his redemption took place in Gethsemane, it is not inconceivable then to interpret this as the fulfillment of the promise recounted in Jewish literature:

Let this sign be in your hands: on the day when I wrought salvation for you, and on that very night [Passover night] know that I will redeem you; but if it is not this night, then do not believe, for the time has not yet come.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, we noted earlier that Christians associate the figurative cup drunk by Jesus with the bitter herbs, but this cup was not called a bitter cup. It is therefore in Latter-day Saint scripture that we find a direct correlation between the bitter herbs and the agony experienced by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. While speaking to Joseph Smith, Jesus said:

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the

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<sup>75</sup> Lefgren, John C. *April Sixth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980) 45

<sup>76</sup> Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:18

<sup>77</sup> Lehrman, Rabbi Dr. S.M. *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus* (New York: The Soncino Press, 1983) 228

greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit – and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink.<sup>78</sup>

For anyone who has ever tasted of the bitter herbs at Passover, it should not be difficult to relate to the desire of shrinking and wishing that it not be necessary to eat them just as Jesus felt about his great suffering in Gethsemane although the severity of each is incomparable.

### ***Passover and Latter-day Saint Baptism and Sacrament***

There are several obvious and a few not-so-obvious correlations between the Latter-day Saint ordinance of baptism, its partner ordinance – the sacrament, and Passover. To understand how these ordinances relate, it will be helpful to equate baptism with the initial Passover and departure from Egypt and to equate the sacrament with subsequent Passover observance. Baptism, like the initial Passover was, is a unique one-time experience. The sacrament, like all subsequent Passover celebrations, is a perpetual reminder of that original event.

The clearest association between the Latter-day Saint baptism and Passover is that both signified a new beginning, a rebirth of sorts; baptism signifying the rebirth of the soul, while Passover signifying the birth of the Israelite nation and their return to the land of their inheritance. When baptized, a Latter-day Saint is completely immersed in water. Upon exiting the water, he or she is considered clean and reborn spiritually. This is comparable to the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. They also passed through water, though assuredly with thanksgiving that they did not need to get wet! This crossing may be compared with the emerging of a babe from its mother's womb.<sup>79</sup> In both cases, faith is requisite. Without faith, a person cannot be baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Without faith, an Israelite would not have followed Moses' instructions to kill the Paschal lamb and smear its blood on the doorposts and lintel.

Furthermore, in both cases, a covenant is associated with the event, or ritual. Faith is again a key element to this covenant because not all the commandments are given at the time of the ritual. The Israelites did not receive all the commandments they were to live by until they built the Tabernacle and reached Mt. Sinai, and Latter-day Saints do not receive all the commandments they are to live by until they are able to go to the temple. This

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<sup>78</sup> D&C 19:16-18

<sup>79</sup> Pratt, John P. "Passover: Was it Symbolic of His Coming?" *Ensign* (Jan, 1994) 40

relation is significant because of the association of Mt. Sinai and the tabernacle with Latter-day Saint temples. All three follow the typology for temples in the ancient Near East as set forth by John M. Lundquist.<sup>80</sup>

After the Israelites left Egypt, they were commanded to “keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.”<sup>81</sup> Therefore, a yearly commemoration was held to help them remember “that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.”<sup>82</sup> These annual celebrations were not a repetition of the original Passover, but rituals designed to renew the covenants of the house of Israel with God. Likewise is the sacrament a separate ritual from baptism, but with the purpose of renewing a Latter-day Saint’s baptismal covenants, and eventually his or her temple covenants as well. This is also done in a perpetual and cyclical manner, being held weekly. Like with the slaying of the Paschal lamb at the Temple where the Levites officiated, priests of the Latter-day Saints officiate at the sacrament table.

The nature of the Paschal sacrifice is also portrayed through the Latter-day Saint sacrament. We have already established that the Paschal sacrifice was a special peace offering, offered in remembrance of God’s bounteous blessings with the desire for continued prosperity at the hand of God. The sacrament prayer for Latter-day Saints offers an identical sentiment:

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.<sup>83</sup>

Notice that the blessing calls upon those partaking of the sacrament to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ. Likewise the Israelites took upon themselves the name of their God when they departed from Egypt and were known as a peculiar people.<sup>84</sup> As part of their being chosen, they were expected to keep His commandments. In return they, like Latter-day Saints today, were promised continued blessings.

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<sup>80</sup> Lundquist, John M. “What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology,” in Donald W. Parry, *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (Salt Lake City/Provo: Deseret Books/FARMS, 1994) 184-185

<sup>81</sup> Exodus 13:10

<sup>82</sup> Exodus 13:8

<sup>83</sup> D&C 20:77

<sup>84</sup> Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18

The last similarity of this section lies in the manner of preparation for the Paschal sacrifice by the Jews, and for the sacrament by Latter-day Saints. While officiating the Paschal sacrifices at the Temple, the priests would sing or chant the Hallel.<sup>85</sup> Just before Jesus and his disciples closed their Seder and went out to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would begin the sacrifice of himself, they likewise sung the Hallel.<sup>86</sup> Today, Latter-day Saints always prepare for the sacrament by singing a special hymn immediately preceding the blessing and administering of the sacrament. This hymn may be compared then, with the singing of the Hallel anciently by the Levites and the disciples of Jesus.

### ***Jesus' Resurrection and Passover Symbolism***

As noted earlier, there is an association among Christians between the resurrection of Jesus as the firstfruits of the grave and Passover as a springtime celebration of the firstfruits of the field. However, Latter-day Saint beliefs add greater depth to this association.

That Jesus was the firstfruits of his mother's womb, and the first and only son of God on this earth is accepted by all Christians. However, Latter-day Saints would add that Jesus, in addition to these things, was also the firstborn of all God's children in what is termed the pre-mortal existence. Herein lies a profound connection between Jesus, the Paschal lamb, and Passover in general. According to Latter-day Saints, Jesus, the firstborn of God pre-mortally and in this life, was offered as the "great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but...an infinite and eternal sacrifice."<sup>87</sup>

To understand how Latter-day Saint theology further affects their view of the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and Passover, it is necessary to understand how they differ from traditional Christianity on the nature of resurrection. This doctrine is best explained by Amulek, a Book of Mormon prophet.

Now, behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body. I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body...that they can die no more. The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time. Now this

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<sup>85</sup> Klein, Mordell ed. *Passover* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973) 26-27

<sup>86</sup> Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26

<sup>87</sup> Alma 34:10

restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now.<sup>88</sup>

The key difference here is that Latter-day Saints believe that the resurrection entails the rejoining of the spirit and body while much of contemporary Christianity believes that we live on as spirits. The Latter-day Saint doctrine is consistent with Jesus' reprove to his disciples after his resurrection when he appeared to them and they disbelieved, thinking he was an apparition. "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."<sup>89</sup>

Like Christians, Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus was the first to resurrect. Speaking about seventy-five years before the birth of Jesus, Alma, another Book of Mormon prophet, explains "that there is no resurrection...until after the coming of Christ. Behold, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead."<sup>90</sup> This naturally begs the question of what the state of these people was during the interim period. Alma further explains that the spirits of all men and women, upon death, are accepted into what is called the spirit world. It is in this state that they await their resurrection.

So what does all this have to do with Passover? The answer comes from a vision had by Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet and president of the Church. President Smith relates the following:

I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great. And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality; and who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>91</sup>

Smith goes on to explain that "the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage."<sup>92</sup> Thus, just as God liberated the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt and restored them to the land of

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<sup>88</sup> Alma 11:45, 43-44

<sup>89</sup> Luke 24:39

<sup>90</sup> Alma 40:2-3

<sup>91</sup> D&C 138:11-14

<sup>92</sup> D&C 138:50



their inheritance, so Jesus liberated the spirits of the righteous dead and provided them with their earned inheritance in the kingdom of God.

### ***Passover as an Explanatory Model for Latter-day Saints***

As with Jews and Christians, Latter-day Saints feel that the timeless mythological aspect of the Passover story applies to their own existence too. The first several decades of the Church's existence saw little else than persecution in the various areas they tried to settle in – Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois being the most prominent. The atrocities they underwent are well documented in the *History of the Church* by Joseph Smith. Ironically, as with the Jews from the Middle Ages through today, most of the persecution came at the hands of Christians.

The experience of Latter-day Saints bears other similarities to that of the ancient Israelites. Like the Israelites in Egypt, Latter-day Saints found their lives in peril. However, unlike the Israelites in Egypt, who suffered through the decree of Pharaoh that all male children be killed, the Latter-day Saints actually had an extermination order issued against them by Governor Lilburn Boggs of Missouri. This persecution eventually led to the westward trek of the Mormon Pioneers.

This exodus of sorts helps Latter-day Saints further relate to the Passover story on a mythological plane. When they were finally driven from Nauvoo, Illinois, the pioneers had to begin their journey by crossing the Missouri River. Although they did not cross miraculously as did the Israelites, the association remains at least superficially. Before they started on this long and difficult journey, Brigham Young, the then leader of the Church ensured that each adult received his or her ordinances in the temple. The purpose for this was to give them the power and strength they would need to complete the journey. Likewise the Israelites began their journey with instruction from God in a temple setting at Sinai. Once they reached the Salt Lake valley, the pioneers found themselves in a desert wanting much for food and sustenance, but being unable to provide any for themselves. It was at this point that God intervened with a miracle. Just as the Israelites woke to find manna and quail for their sustenance, so too did the Latter-day Saints in these dire circumstances find relief as quail miraculously fell into their camps in the droves.

### ***Latter-day Saint Temples and Passover***

We have already established that there is a connection between the Israelites' tabernacle, Mt. Sinai, and Latter-day Saint temples. We have also noted that in all cases with only one exception, the recording of a national Passover observance in the Hebrew Scriptures is associated with the building, rebuilding, or rededication of the Temple. To review, this is true in the case of the construction of the Tabernacle under Moses, the construction of Solomon's Temple, the rededication of this temple under Hezekiah, the rebuilding of the Temple by Zerubbabel, and the rededication of that temple under Josiah. The exception is when the Israelites observe Passover just prior to entering Canaan under Joshua. This pattern is reflected in the prescribed action of purging one's home of leaven in preparation for Passover. With such a pattern established, it is not surprising to find that Jesus twice cleansed the Temple at Passover time. The first time was at the beginning of his ministry.<sup>93</sup> The second time was just prior to his crucifixion after he had ridden triumphantly into Jerusalem.<sup>94</sup> Jesus often compared leaven with false teachings and hypocrisy.<sup>95</sup> Thus his cleansing of the Temple, which he claimed was his house and the house of God, his father, may be seen as a fulfillment of the symbolic action by Jews of removing leaven from their homes.

This pattern is also found in Latter-day Saint history. The first temple of the Latter-day Saints was built in Kirtland, Ohio under the direction of Joseph Smith. It was dedicated on March 27, 1836, about a week before the start of Passover for that year. According to the pattern iterated above, a remarkable event took place the following week that has made that Passover forever recorded in the minds and hearts of Latter-day Saints.

### ***Elijah's Return***

For centuries, Jews have followed the tradition of setting a place for the prophet Elijah. In addition, at a prescribed point in the Seder, it is traditional to have one or more of the children rise and open the door for Elijah to enter. No one really knows exactly when or where these traditions began, but the expectation that Elijah would

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<sup>93</sup> John 2:14-16

<sup>94</sup> Matthew 21:12-14; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-47

<sup>95</sup> Matthew 16:12; Luke 12:1

return on Passover to the temple as a forerunner to the Messiah in order to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi<sup>96</sup> is nonetheless a fixed part of Passover for Jews today.

Therefore, it is of great significance to Latter-day Saints that on April 3, 1836, the second day of Passover for that year, and one week after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith recorded the following remarkable vision:

The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters. After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north. After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed. After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi... Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.<sup>97</sup>

This vision occurred during the evening hours, precisely the time that Jews in that area would have been opening their doors for Elijah to return. Latter-day Saints believe that he did in fact return on Passover, but that he came to the temple to restore the keys of sealing families together for eternity.

As support for the validity of this vision, we should turn again to Jewish literature. In explanation of Exodus 12:42, the Midrash Rabbah as translated by Lehrman asks:

Why does He call it ‘a night of watching?’ Because, on that night, He performed great things for the righteous, just as He had wrought for Israel in Egypt. On that night, He saved Hezekiah, Hananiah

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<sup>96</sup> Malachi 4:5-6

<sup>97</sup> D&C 110:1-3, 11-14, 16

and his companions, Daniel from the lions' den, and on that night Messiah and Elijah will be made great.<sup>98 99</sup>

The beauty of this vision to Latter-day Saints is that in addition to the appearance of Jesus and Elijah, Moses also appeared to restore the keys of the gathering of Israel. Thus, through Moses the Israelites were delivered from Egypt and restored to their homeland anciently, and today, through Moses, they are again delivered from their dispersion and restored to their homeland; and it happened the very day that commemorates their original deliverance.

### ***The Importance of Passover to Latter-day Saints.***

As we can see from the preceding discussion, Latter-day Saint perceptions of Passover build on both Christian and Jewish beliefs and traditions. Some of the unique beliefs belonging to Latter-day Saints include that Jesus was born on Passover; that the Paschal lamb especially typifies him because he was the firstborn of God in the pre-mortal existence; that between his death and resurrection during the Passover season he went to the spirit world and liberated the righteous dead from a state they had considered to be bondage until then; that his suffering at Gethsemane the first night of Passover specifically identifies him as the Messiah according to Jewish tradition; that there is a correlation between baptism and crossing the Red Sea as well as the sacrament and subsequent Passover observances; and that the appearance of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple follows precisely the association established between the dedication of temples and significant Passovers.

Furthermore, Passover exemplifies several key aspects of Latter-day Saint faith. Just as the Israelites had to demonstrate their faith by using the hyssop to smear blood on their doorways, Latter-day Saints believe that “it is by grace that we are saved, after all that we can do.”<sup>100</sup> Literally speaking, the Egyptians can testify as James testified, “Faith without works is dead.”<sup>101</sup> Also, the Israelites were commanded to completely consume the roasted lamb. Likewise Latter-day Saints are instructed to fully embrace the Gospel, to figuratively eat it whole as

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<sup>98</sup> Radal changes this to “will appear” – merely omitting one letter ((7

<sup>99</sup> Lehrman, Rabbi Dr. S.M. *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus* (New York: The Soncino Press, 1983) 227

<sup>100</sup> 2 Nephi 25:23

<sup>101</sup> James 2:20

John did <sup>102</sup> In essence, Latter-day Saints learn from this that the Atonement of Jesus, as represented by the roasted Paschal lamb must be fully applied.

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<sup>102</sup> Revelation 10:10; further explained in D&C 77:14

## **Conclusion**

Passover is obviously a celebration rich in meaning and history. This paper has attempted to cover the essentials of how Passover has changed over the centuries and what it has meant to Jews, Christians, and Latter-day Saints. But simply recounting and analyzing history does not help us fully understand it. History, or at least events that replicate history, must be experienced to be fully comprehended. Thus, our objective is incomplete with just this paper.

To this end, I have undertaken to present a Passover Seder that is widely accessible and appropriately captures the essence of Passover. Admittedly I have, in a sense, attempted the impossible since almost any Jew will agree that Passover cannot be truly captured on film. In fact, some, perhaps many, would argue that to try to capture Passover on film is not appropriate at all. But my hope is that my efforts will help those who are not familiar with Passover to become familiar with it and appreciate it for what it is. I also hope that those who are already familiar with Passover will find this project a deep repository of accurate and insightful Passover knowledge.

I believe that when studying religious traditions other than our own, we must strive to understand their beliefs and traditions from their perspective. However, to completely abandon one's own perspective is to miss how the subject matter pertains to one's self. Thus I have tried to not present this project from a Latter-day Saint perspective exclusively. Instead I have tried to present each section from the perspective that it is discussing. In doing this, my hope is that each person that reads this will not only gain an appreciation for how others view Passover, but also gain insight into his or her own unique views of Passover.

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