

March 2010

Passover begins on the
Evening of March 29, 2010



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FOR THE 2010
JEWISH JEWELS
HAVUKKAH MERCY MISSION.
SPACE IS LIMITED
TO 20 PEOPLE!

Blessings in the Name of the Lamb who was slain,

Cups

This Passover our message is sober. The joy of this special Feast of the Lord is overshadowed by the intense suffering of a nation—Haiti—and the end-time wrestling match of spiritual powers over God's Chosen City—Jerusalem. The world is getting a taste of the "cup of suffering."

The Bible has a lot to say about "cups" (*kos*, singular. *kosot*, plural: with long o's). The first mention concerns Pharaoh's cup and his chief butler who Joseph met while in prison. This sets the stage for cups. **Kings** had cups, and cupbearers who filled their cups for them. Nehemiah (1:11) was the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes of Babylon. King Ahasuerus (Book of Esther) had golden cups. God also has a cup. This cup involves judgment. Although God is a God of Love, He is also a Holy God, who is Righteous and Just, and can not tolerate sin. This month we need to be reminded of this other aspect of God so that we can have a healthy fear of the Lord—reverence, awe, and respect.

"Cup" in the Holy Scriptures also represents an individual's destiny or allotted portion. There is a portion for the wicked, and a portion for the righteous. *"The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup."* (Psalm 11:5-6) On the other hand, God Himself is the portion of the cup of those who trust in the Lord: *"O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot"* (Psalm 16:5). The cup of the righteous is an overflowing cup: *"... You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over"* (Psalm 23:5).

The Four Cups of Passover

Passover seders will be celebrated all over the world on the evening of March 29 this year. The same order (seder) of service will be followed regardless of country or language. The entire seder is structured around **four cups** of wine. The generally accepted explanation of the four cups is that they symbolize the four expressions of redemption which the Torah uses in declaring God's salvation of His people Israel. These are found in Exodus 6:6-7: *"Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians [#1], I will rescue you from their bondage [#2], and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments [#3]. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God...' "* [#4].

God says "I will" four times to the children of Israel. Four promises. Four cups at the Passover seder. The cups are not empty, but filled with wine, symbolic of the blood of covenant. At the time of Yeshua, the wine had to be red, and was one part wine, two parts water. The early Church observed this traditional custom in Communion. The wine was also warm, a remembrance of the blood of the Passover lambs. The Jewish Talmud insists that even the poorest were to receive all four cups at the Passover meal since wine also symbolizes joy in Judaism. If they could not afford this, they would sell or pawn their clothing to make it possible. It was also customary not to fill one's own cup, but to have someone else fill it for you as a sign of freedom!

The first cup in the Passover seder has a special name, *kadesh*, which comes from *kiddush*, literally sanctification. God promised to bring His people out of Egypt, from under the burdens of the Egyptians, to give them a new beginning, a fresh start. The people of God would be set apart—for Himself. God was purchasing them, just as we who believe in Yeshua have been purchased. When we compare redemption at the Passover with our redemption through Yeshua, we see that one foreshadows the other. *"Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, the tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed—..."* (Psalm 74:2). *"...you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory"* (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Before Yeshua the Messiah took the first cup at His final Passover seder, He said to His *talmidim* (disciples): *"...With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God"* (Luke 22:15-16). Yeshua was sanctified to suffer. It was His portion, His destiny, because of the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

We are sanctified as well. We are called to be holy because our God is holy. But are we sanctified to suffer? Only if we agree with Rabbi Saul (the Apostle Paul) who fervently prayed: *"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..."* (Philippians 3:10).

The second cup during the seder, *kos sheini*, occurs before the seder meal. It is taken after a recital of the cruel bondage suffered at the hands of the Egyptians. The ten plagues that God visited on the Egyptians, judging their gods, has just been remembered. With each plague, a drop of wine from one's cup is spilled on a plate, indicating that God's people do not rejoice over the suffering of their enemies. In fact, their joy (symbolized by the wine) is decreased because their enemies suffer.

Cup #2 is often called the Cup of Judgment. The God of Israel pronounced judgment on the gods of Egypt in the same way that He judges sin. The penalty that sin deserves is death (Romans 6:23). But Yeshua took that penalty upon Himself. In *Gat Shemen*, the Garden of Gethsemane, He took the second Passover cup, the Cup of Judgment. The Bible tells us that drops of blood fell from his head onto the dusty "plate" of the Mount of Olives. Sorrowful, and deeply distressed, Yeshua fell on His face and prayed, *"...O My Father, if it is possible, let **this cup** pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"* (Matthew 26:39).

Cup #3, *kos sh'lishi*, is also known as the "Cup of Redemption" or the "Cup of Blessing." This cup is taken after the meal, and focuses on God's promise: *"...I will redeem you..."* (Exodus 6:6). The idea of God being powerful to save enters here. He promises to redeem His people from slavery, meaning that He would buy them back. The Apostle Peter, in referring to the redemption purchased for us by the Messiah, said: *"...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ [Messiah], as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The third cup is also known as *Kos Shel B'rakhah*, the grace cup, the cup over which Grace is said after meals. Yeshua, the Messiah, attached new significance to this cup: *"...He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'"* (Luke 22:20). This cup was used by Yeshua to symbolize His death, and at the same time inaugurate the New Covenant, the *B'rit Hadasha*. "Grace" certainly did come after the meal in the Upper Room at that last Passover!

The Apostle Paul referred to the third Passover cup when he said, *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ [Messiah]?..."* (1 Corinthians 10:16). "Communion" as the church knows it, is essentially a Messianic Supper, a Hebrew *zikaron*, remembrance, and a re-enactment, in part, of a Passover seder.

The fourth cup at a Passover seder is called *Kos R'vi'i/Nirtzah*, the Cup of Praise or the Cup of Acceptance. It reminds us that the real goal of redemption, the goal of cups one, two and three is relationship. God redeems people to have relationship with them. He affirms, *"I will take you for my people and I will be your God."* The Hallel Psalms 115 through 118, and 136 are recited or sung, giving praise to God not only for His great salvation, but for His character and ways, for who He is. The miracle of our redemption through The Eternal Passover Lamb, Yeshua, is our acceptance in the Beloved. Though our sins were as scarlet, they have been made white as snow. This is indeed cause for great praise!

The Cup of Acceptance also reminds us that a time is coming when our Messiah will take us to Himself: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ [Messiah] will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The Cup of Suffering

Yeshua instructed us to remember His death until He comes again for us. When we participate in the Messianic Meal, the Lord's Passover Seder, (Communion), we seldom focus enough on what Yeshua did for us. His death as The Passover Lamb was a supreme example of sacrificial love. Yeshua took the "cup of suffering" for each one of us—in obedience to the will of His Father. When they took him prisoner in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to Peter, who wanted to defend Him: *"...Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"* (John 18:11)

In **The Messiah in the New Testament**, Risto Santala gives some important insights into the suffering of Yeshua: "Almost one third of the gospel testimony is concentrated on the description of Jesus' suffering and death." It was a divine necessity that Yeshua suffer. Otherwise, we would still be captives of sin. The Messiah knew what lay ahead: *"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again"* (Mark 8:31).

Yeshua was The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). The Jews did not kill Jesus. It was God's plan that His Son die for Jew and non-Jew alike. The timing was also God's. Yeshua died at Passover because He was the Eternal Passover Sacrifice. It is interesting to note that the ancient rabbis believed that the Messiah's suffering would take place in the month of *Nisan*, at Passover time. This referred to their concept of *Mashiach ben Yosef*, the "suffering Messiah." Still, they missed Him when He came! You will enjoy **Mashiach ben Yoseph** by Elhanan ben Avraham, an excellent study on the parallels between Joseph and Yeshua as the suffering Messiah.

We found out for the first time this year that the Samaritans in Israel, who still sacrifice the Paschal lambs in the ancient way, slaughter the lambs without them having a chance to bleat. If the lambs make a sound, the offering is invalid. Consider Yeshua, our Passover Lamb, as prophesied in Isaiah 53:7: *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."*

A Cup of Trembling

God says through the prophet Zechariah that the day will come when Jerusalem will be a heavy stone for all peoples: *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem"* (Zechariah 12:2). That day is upon us. A recent article by Hillel Fendel, "Real Danger to Jerusalem as Israel's Undivided Capital," reported a meeting held in an eastern Jerusalem hospital on the Mount of Olives between leading PA and Norwegian diplomats. The topic was the re-opening of a Palestinian Authority headquarters in East

Jerusalem which has been closed since August 2001. Benny Elon, former Minister of Tourism, called the developments "critically dangerous." He sees this as the big test of the Netanyahu government. In his words, "Jerusalem is the heart of our state, and there cannot be any compromise...There has been massive Jewish building in nearby neighborhoods...but all this is worthless if the Palestinians take over buildings in the eastern part of the city and operate their institutions from there."

We must understand, and try to make others understand, that the Palestinian Authority wants to make Jerusalem the capital of "Palestine." The American consulate in Israel agrees with this, and it seems that our President does as well. This is very dangerous, and not the will of God. Jerusalem has always been the heart and soul of the Jewish people. Each year, for thousands of years, the fervent prayer that ends the Passover seder includes the words, *L'Sha-nah Ha-bah-ah B'Yer-u-sha-la-yim*, Next Year in Jerusalem! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob loves Mount Zion (Psalm 78:68). In 1 Kings 11:36 God calls Jerusalem, *"...the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there."* A prophetic, end of days battle has begun.

A Cup of Cold Water

"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42) We refer to this verse whenever we give a token gift to someone in need. The gift may be small, like a cup of cold water, but when given from the heart, in the name of Yeshua, God is pleased.

We're sure that most of you gave from the heart in the past two months, as we have watched in horror the devastating suffering of the people of Haiti following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake of January 12, 2010. Both the "just" and the "unjust" suffered. We are told in Matthew 24:7-8 that earthquakes are part of *"the beginning of sorrows."*

Was there a connection to Haiti's welcoming Voodoo as a State Religion? Is Haiti under a curse? We know for sure that Haiti desperately needs our prayers. We have been in the Dominican Republic, which is on the same island as Haiti. The two countries are like night and day. In the Dominican Republic, flowers bloom, birds sing, and natural beauty abounds. Haiti was desolate and dry even before the earthquake. Perhaps the cup of iniquity was full. But God longs to save people—all people. Compassion dictates that we give what we can to alleviate suffering, even if it is only a cup of cold water. Certainly in Haiti in the days and weeks following the earthquake, water was a great blessing.

In considering the tragedy of Haiti, or New Orleans after Katrina, or 9/11 in New York City, we ponder the question that Jane Clayson on CBS' Early Show asked Anne Graham Lotz, the daughter of Billy Graham: "Why didn't God stop 9/11? How could He let his happen?" Anne Lotz replied: "For several years now Americans in a sense have shaken their fist at God and said, 'God, we want you out of our schools, our government, our business. We want you out of our marketplace.' And God, who is a gentleman, has just quietly backed out of our national, political, and our public life, removing His hand of blessing and protection."

Let us learn the lesson: God will step aside and let us have our own way. The great need of the hour is for us to cry out for mercy for our own country as well as for Haiti. We must all return to God!! Even good people suffer from the bad decisions made by others, especially those in power. All of mankind suffers because of the bad decisions made by Adam and Eve. Our one hope, and it is a great hope, is to "fall on the Rock," Yeshua, the Messiah, and make Him the Lamb for each of our households.

Love in Messiah, our Passover,



P.S. There is a cup we want to avoid, the "Cup of God's Fury," reserved for the wicked.