



April 2011

Erev Pesach 4/18/11

Firstborn males fast the day before Pesach to commemorate the survival of the Jewish firstborn sons at the Exodus from Egypt.

Passover Blessings in the Beloved!

Miracle "Kids"

As we were meditating about the important role that "children" play in the Passover Seder, we received an email from Israel about "kids," and saw the Lord connecting dots in a fascinating way. Our first thought was, "Why are children called 'kids' in English?" Here's the answer: The Anglo-Saxon word for "child" is cild. In ancient times, people often failed to pronounce the letter "l." The similarity of sound between this name and that of a young goat—and the similarity of antics!—led to the use of "kid" as a synonym for "child." There is also a Jewish tradition connecting goats and children. In the Talmud, the "gedi," or young goat is a metaphor for a young student. If there are no kids (students), there will be no adult goats (learned scholars). In keeping with the theme of this month's letter, we will sometimes refer to children as "kids."

The miracle "kids" in Israel are actual goats, not children. Our Jewish Jewels family sowed the seed for this miracle during our December 2010 Mercy Mission, when we gave a Hanukkah gift of five goats to a precious Messianic Jewish couple who have a goat farm in the Galilee. Tal, Adi and their son Boaz shared the miracle with us:

"Wow. The Lord has really opened the door for us with the goats. There is a shortage in Israel of good dairy goats. The Israel Dairy Board just gave six new farmers permission to raise dairy goats. (Everything here works with quotas.) One of the better herds in the country has produced so much above his quota that he is having steep penalties. He therefore decided to sell off his female kids that were born this year. We were blessed that we have first chance to buy from him as many as we want. He did not act as though he wanted to sell us animals that were pregnant. If we had bought animals that were 10-12 months old, he would have wanted at least 1500-2000 NIS per head. That would have given us approximately 7 animals. As it is, we were able to buy with the money we received from you, 30 newborn females.

As a result of your helping us, others decided to help as well. Our goal will be to buy all together if the funds come in about 200-250 new babies. We can't see any financial fruit from this right away. These animals will only give birth in about 14 months from now. This will more than double our present herd size and will start to change the dynamics here on the farm we believe.

Thank you both so much and the others that contributed the extra \$1,000 and Jewish Jewels. God bless you all. **[The funds came in and they now have 200 new kids!]**

Passover and Kids

"And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households...'" (Ex. 12:26-27)

Moses instructed the Children of Israel to obey their God by observing the Passover as an ordinance for them and their sons forever (Ex. 12:24). Again, in Ex. 13:8, *"And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt'."* The command to instruct children is the origin of the "telling" of the Exodus story.

This narration, or "*haggadah*" in Hebrew, was to be an unbroken chain, *dor v'dor*, from generation to generation, making children an integral part of the retelling of the Exodus from Egypt. The parent-child relationship was the primary means through which faith, *emunah*, was implanted in the next generation. Passover is still first and foremost a family celebration, taking place in Jewish homes around the world. It is the meal of meals, the only one with an order (*sefer*) liturgically regulated. The Passover actually begins the night before with the search for leaven, *Bedikat Chametz*. The father of the home leads his children by candlelight, equipped with a feather and wooden spoon, on a special mission to rid the house of all traces of leaven. When our sons Jonathan and Jesse were little this was one of their favorite Passover activities. Paper bag in hand, they raced around the house, excitedly pointing out cookie crumbs, cheerios, and pieces of bread that "just happened" to be left there by Jamie. Somehow, it became a competition of who found the most leaven. Our explanation of the deep symbolism of God showing us our hidden sin by the light of His Word (candle) and His Spirit (feather), and placing them in His mercy on a wooden cross (spoon), was secondary to the thrill of the game. Kids! Things became a bit more somber as we made a fire the next morning on the sidewalk and burned up all the leaven. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.*" (Ps. 103:12-13)

As families prepare for the Passover Seder, children are generally involved in helping with some of the many details. The "good" dishes come out, the house is cleaned, silver utensils begin to appear, tables and folding chairs are set up, apples and carrots are peeled (lots of them!), boxes of once-a-year favorites such as egg matzah and chocolate marshmallow candies are bought, and the prospect of matzah pizza for seven days is cause for great delight.

Passover is a feast for the senses, even before it begins. The seder itself is filled with visual aids that involve sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell, making the experience a very rich one, especially for kids. Crunchy matzah. Bitter horseradish. Sweet *haroset*. Parsely dipped in salt water. And then the dinner that follows: Is there a child who does not like a fluffy matzah ball in tasty chicken soup? Matzah kugel? Matzah stuffing? Tzimmes? Are you getting hungry?

Part of this multi-sensory simulation of the Exodus involves something that children always enjoy: dipping their finger in a cup of grape juice and spilling out one drop for each of the ten plagues visited upon the Egyptians. What kid doesn't like the chance to "play with his food"? Nevertheless, there is a serious lesson that the children learn as well: Since the cup of wine represents joy, there is less joy each time the Egyptians suffered. We are not to rejoice at the misfortune of others, even if they are our enemies. Kids need to be taught the value of compassion.

It is important to make Passover as meaningful as possible for children, involving them according to their developmental level. This may mean special haggadot for them to color, seder puppets, plastic animals to represent the plagues, etc. or the explanation that using our finger to dip into the cup reminds us that it was the "*finger of God*" which brought the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 8:19).

Children and Questions

The Passover service is filled with questions. The ability to question is a precious gift. Judaism encourages parents to nurture this in their children. Free people question. Bright, active young minds also question. Jesse was always full of questions. Actually, at 22, he still is! Since Jesse was our youngest, he was the one called upon to ask the traditional Four Questions that begin the telling of the Passover story. These questions are chanted in Hebrew, and then translated into English: *Mah nishtanah halailah hazeh mikol haleilot* (Why does this night differ from all other nights)? For on all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night only leavened bread? The other questions involve the bitter herbs that are eaten, dipping twice, and reclining while eating. The Four Questions are part of the Passover Seder in direct response to the Torah command of Exodus

12:26. They are at the beginning of the seder to stimulate the children's curiosity about what is going to happen. The kids are made active participants in the Passover Seder, a deliberate attempt to involve the younger generation and Lord willing, help preserve the continuity of the Jewish family and God's People Israel. We are defined by what we celebrate.

The Four Questions have changed over time. There used to be a question about the paschal lamb. This was deleted when the Temple was destroyed, and Passover lambs were no longer sacrificed. Jewish people today do not eat lamb at Passover. In our family, as Messianic Jews, we each eat a small piece of roasted lamb at the point in the seder when the *zeroa*, the shankbone of the lamb, is mentioned. Then, we proclaim Yeshua, as the Lamb of God, who is our Passover.

The Four Sons

Four sons, *Arba'ah Banim* in Hebrew, are described in the Haggadah, based on the four times that the Torah commands us to teach our children about the Exodus from Egypt. The ancient rabbis labeled them the wise child (Deut. 6:20), the wicked child (Ex. 12:26), the simple child (Ex. 13:14), and the child who does not know how to ask (Ex. 13:8). Each is answered in a different way, affirming the truth of Prov. 22:6: "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" Religious instruction must be geared to each child individually. Each of the four sons shows, by his question, their attitude concerning the Passover ritual.

The wise son loves Passover, is knowledgeable, and is eager to celebrate the holiday and to learn more. He should be taught specifics to satisfy his hunger. The "wicked" child (perhaps irreverent would be better) asks, "What does this ritual mean to YOU?," disassociating himself from the community. This child needs to see that he, too, was included in the Exodus and is wrong to deny the relevance of the festival for himself. At least this child is asking questions. The simple child is innocent and untrained, asking, 'What is this all about?' and needs to be reassured of Adonai's mighty hand that took Israel out of bondage. The child who does not know how to ask should be helped to learn how to ask, by opening a discussion to stimulate questions.

The four types of children can also be symbolic of four traits within each of us, or four types of people who approach religious life. At any given Passover Seder, there may be one or all four types present. God has answers for them all!

Hide and Go Seek

Every Passover Seder ends with the afikoman ceremony which is called *Tzafun* or "hidden." The word *afikoman* literally means "that which comes after" or "dessert." Before the destruction of the Temple, the afikoman was a small portion of roasted paschal lamb the size of an olive that each participant in the Seder would partake of as the very last thing eaten. The rabbis replaced the lamb with unleavened bread, hence, the afikoman of today is a piece of matzah—the largest half of the middle of three matzot. The afikoman became a symbol of the *Corban pesach*, the paschal sacrifice.

The Passover Seder can not conclude without the afikoman, but it "disappears" at every Seder. Either the father of the house hides it, or the children "steal it." Either way, a child finds it, and does not return it until a reward is given.

The afikoman, broken in two, wrapped in white linen, buried (hidden), and then resurrected (found), is a graphic portrayal of our Messiah's death, burial and resurrection from the dead. Although it is great fun for the children, who especially delight in negotiating the ransom price, the afikoman ceremony is much more than a children's game. It teaches us that what began as "*lechem oni*," the bread of affliction, has now become "*lechem geulah*," the bread of redemption. We learn that there is great joy in finding, and are reminded of Jer. 29:13: "*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*"

As Messianic Jews, what was hidden has been revealed to us. Our redemption has come. Yeshua, our Messiah, has delivered us from spiritual Egypt and the bondage to sin. His body was

broken for us. He paid the price for our sins, and rose from the grave for our justification. Our Messiah lives! We have found the One our soul loves!

An Only Kid

Following the afikoman ceremony, there is no more eating, but lots of joyful activity as psalms are sung along with six traditional Passover songs. These are "z'mirot" or table songs, which are intended to entertain the children. Almost without exception, the final song found in a Passover Haggadah and the most famous Passover song is *Had Gadya*, "An Only Kid," a song about a GOAT!

For years we have been puzzled by this strange ending to the Passover Seder, and have never included it in our family or Temple celebrations. What does a goat have to do with Passover? We did some searching this year, and think we have found a Jewish jewel.

Had Gadya is written in Aramaic with a scattering of Hebrew words. (In Hebrew "one kid" would be *Gedi Echad*.) The song is cumulative, with ten stanzas, and could be considered the Jewish version of "I Know an Old Lady who Swallowed a Fly":

"An only kid! An only kid!

My father bought for two zuzim.

An only kid! An only kid!

Then came the cat

and ate the kid...

Then came the dog

and bit the cat

that ate the kid...

Then came the stick

and beat the dog..."



The song continues with the fire that burned the stick, the water that quenched the fire, the ox that drank the water, the slaughterer who slaughtered the ox, the angel of death who slew the slaughterer and ends with:

"Then came the Holy One, praised be God, and destroyed the angel of death..."

When seen as an allegory, the "kid" is Israel. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob purchased Israel at a high price: blood. The cat, dog, etc. are successive empires that swallowed up one another, including Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, the Vandals, Muslims, Crusaders and Turks. BUT—the Holy One destroyed the angel of death once and for all when the Lamb of God laid down His life as an atoning sacrifice for the sin of all mankind at PASSOVER. We, as God's kids, have been bought with a price—the blood of God's ONLY SON—who was raised from the dead, giving us the gift of eternal life.

Yeshua, our Passover and soon-coming King says to us this Passover: *"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys to Hades and of Death"* (Rev. 1:18).

Much Love in Yeshua! Neil & Jamie

P.S. Please visit our brand new Jewish Jewels website: www.jewishjewels.org

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