

# VIRTUAL PASSOVER 2008

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by Margaret McKee Huey

“These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD’s Passover. Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, “When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it...It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places”’” (Leviticus 23: 4-11, 14b).

Since 1995, our entire family has been in a state of transition concerning the Spring holiday celebrations. As Christians, we were raised to celebrate and observe Easter, thinking that it was indeed a Biblical holy day. Was not the account of the Resurrection of the Messiah recorded for us in the Gospels? Was not the event so profound that the sky darkened, an earthquake occurred, the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, and the Messiah was raised from the dead? However, how many of our past Easter celebrations have only had the simplicity of that wonderful message of “He is risen!” Most of us who celebrated Easter did not hold to this simplicity of observance. Instead, the Easter we remember is full of traditional practices that have absolutely nothing to do with the event that happened in Jerusalem at the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread in the Land of Israel. And, it is safe to say that it is **these traditional practices** that so many of us have been challenged with to stop. So then, how did the Biblical Passover change to Easter in the Church?

In 325 C.E., the first ecumenical council in which the Eastern and Western “Catholic Church” came together was the Council of Nicea. The Emperor Constantine headed this Council, which had its purpose to settle the Arian controversy so that the Church could be united and at peace. Although this Council had many good points that it embraced, it also was the first time state authority involved itself in theological affairs. It set a precedent where later church councils, at state insistence, pulled away from the Hebraic understanding of the Biblical practices.

Various pockets of Christians had been celebrating the Passover with the Jews on the 14th of Nisan until this time. Many of the Eastern churches, claiming to follow a tradition delivered to them by Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John, were remembering the Resurrection of Yeshua (“Easter”) three days after the Jewish Passover on any day of the week. The Western Church strongly believed that this practice had to be stopped, and determined that Easter should be calculated on the Sunday that came next after the full moon of the vernal equinox. In 341 C.E. the Council of Antioch forbade Christians from celebrating Passover at all, and ordered them to only celebrate Easter:

“But if any one of those who preside in the Church, whether he be bishop, presbyter, or deacon, shall presume, after this decree, to exercise his own private judgment to the subversion of the people and to the disturbance of the churches, by observing Easter [at the same time] with the Jews, the holy Synod decrees that he shall thenceforth be an alien from the Church, as one who not only heaps sins upon himself, but who is also the cause of destruction and subversion to many; and it deposes not only such persons themselves from their ministry, but those also who after their deposition shall presume to communicate with them” (Canon 1).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Post-Nicene Fathers*, P. Schaff, ed.; [Libronix Digital Library System 1.0d: Church History Collection](#). MS Windows XP. Garland, TX: Galaxie Software. 2002.

We are not to continue to embrace non-Biblical practices that have been handed down to us in ignorance by our forefathers. Why were they handed down to us in the first place, we must ask? Simply put, the answer, for those of us who are not Jewish, is that our ancestors were not grounded in the ways of the Torah. They simply did not know any better! They did not know that we were not to mix the holy with the profane. From a scholastic standpoint, the Reformers who saw many of Catholicism's errors did not have the benefit of the Jewish-Christian dialogue and relations that we have today, which has led Bible teachers to research the Hebraic Roots of our faith. But for those of us who have been awakened and have embraced a Messianic walk with the Messiah, we can no longer have this excuse of not knowing the Torah. We need to learn to obey the Lord in a fuller way.

### **Personal Family Testimony**

For our family, the walk of faith that has lead us to become Messianic has caused us to actively change three areas in our faith observance that are different from our Church upbringing. First, we now observe the *Shabbat* rest, instead of Sunday Church. Second, we now eat Biblically kosher, instead of anything that our pallet desires. And third, we now observe the Biblical appointed times that are listed in Leviticus 23, instead of the Church holidays that were passed down from the Catholic Church to the Protestant ones. Has this transition been an easy one? No, family traditions are hard to change. Yet, I am happy to say that within our own small family, we have been able to adopt the Biblical practices and drop the un-Biblical ones "fairly" easily. The main reasons that the changes have not been too hard are two-fold. First, we earnestly desire to be as Biblical as possible and to continue down that path that our Reformer and Protesting ancestors did before us. Not all of them, unfortunately, got the full revelation on the Torah, holidays, *Shabbat*, food, etc. And second, we desire as a family to walk and to do and to be like our Messiah Yeshua in all things, as much as possible.

I can say that in the continual transformation that our family has been through to become as Biblical as possible, we have been able to put away our Easter observance. Instead, we now celebrate Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits. Our family has come to the conclusion that to observe the Passover season is to do another thing that Yeshua did. That alone is enough to observe the Feast! Yeshua's last supper was the Passover meal (*sedar*) in which He spoke to His Disciples concerning His atoning death that was shortly to come. He was crucified as our Passover Lamb at the very time when the priests were killing the Passover lambs in Jerusalem. Yeshua was raised from the dead after three days and three nights (the sign of Jonah) in the tomb. I believe His tomb was found empty early in the morning after *Shabbat* on the Day of First Fruits. He was the first fruit offering unto the Father. Needless to say, we no longer have any desire to color Easter eggs, have Easter baskets or go on Easter egg hunts!

### **Family Observance**

Our family has come to that place in our lives where memories of Easter are just that—memories. Yes, we have extended family and friends who do not understand why we no longer have Easter baskets, Easter eggs, egg hunts, sunrise services, and Easter ham dinners with yeast rolls. In fact, they never understood **why we did not have the Easter Bunny when we still celebrated Easter!** As much as I love my extended family and friends, I love my Savior more. It is He whom I wish to please! So, with that in mind, I want to share with you just a bit of our family celebration of the Passover season.

The wonderful thing about the Biblical holidays it that our Heavenly Father wants us to remember these great events by celebrating them! Passover has so many wonderful truths that we can celebrate. When Yeshua observed Passover during His life, He did so in Jerusalem, with the final fulfillment having Him as the Passover Lamb of God. We can delight in rejoining with our Jewish brethren by celebrating Passover with them.

Our family observes these festivities very practically. First, we take the time after *Purim* (one month before Passover) to start our Spring cleaning. This cleaning culminates in our getting all of the leaven out of our house before the first night of Passover. Second, we prepare to have our own family Passover *sedar* meal with all of our best china and the traditional elements to remember the first Passover, and Yeshua's Last Sedar, as we are instructed to do in Leviticus 23. And third, we often have a congregational *sedar* the next night. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we continue to remember the story of the Exodus as well as what transpired after the Messiah's crucifixion. We do not eat any leaven bread, just like the Israelites who came out of Egypt.

We also remember the Resurrection that happened as the *Shabbat* was turning into the first day of the week at twilight. We remember that the disciples found the tomb empty. We remember the two men who walked to the town of Emmaus with Yeshua after the resurrection and did not recognize Him until then broke *matzah* with Him. We also remember how they said He had opened up the Scriptures to them as they walked on the road and that their hearts "burned within them" (Luke 24). The whole Passover season is a wonderful time for our family to truly reflect on what the Lord has done for us as His blood has been put on the doorposts of our hearts, so that we too will be passed over by the death angel and walk in resurrected life. A general feeling of family and fellowship should permeate each day. The love of the Messiah should be strongly felt in each home and the promise of His coming. Our family can truly say that it is not missing out on anything during the holiday season!

### **Loving Each Other**

If our extended family or friends question why we do not celebrate Easter anymore, we make sure to let them know that even though we have stopped practicing non-Biblical traditions that Easter now represents—we still very much believe in the Biblical account of the Resurrection of Yeshua as it is recorded in the Gospels. We believe that He is the Passover Lamb of God. We believe that His Last Supper was His Last Sedar. We believe that He was crucified on the day when the Passover lambs were killed. We believe that He was dead for three days and three nights. We believe that He rose from the dead on the third day. Although they usually do not understand why we are doing all these "Jewish" things, they will still see that we have not stopped believing in the Messiah. Because for many people when you announce that you "don't believe in Easter because of all the pagan practices that have been added to the event," they truly do not understand what you mean. They often think you do not believe in the Resurrection or in the Messiah anymore!

How do we deal with our extended family and friends who still do not understand why we are not celebrating Easter like they are? Our family believes that the restoration of the Spring holidays is a blessing to us! We, who are to walk as Messiah Yeshua walked, must reach out to others in love at this time when the Father is restoring His appointed times to His people. Yeshua told us that people would know that we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another. So, let us love our family and friends in such a way concerning these feasts that they will be drawn to us, and not repelled. For, dear friends, it is through our unconditional love for them that one day they will want to know what we know about walking like the Messiah. One day they will want to know why we have become thoroughly Messianic. Let us reach out and show them the better way. Let us rejoice in the true understanding that Yeshua not only actively participated in the Spring Feasts of the Lord, but that He was indeed the Passover Lamb Himself!