

The Passover Lamb was regarded as the most important element at the Seder table in the Passover Tradition of the First Century Jewish Community. The Passover Lamb had provided through its death the redemption of Israel from Egyptian slavery. Because of this, according to the Mishnah in tractate Pesachim chapters 5 through 10¹, great respect and care was given to the Passover lamb. As part of this, there was a strong ruling regarding the eating of at least a small piece of the lamb at the conclusion of the meal. It was necessary for this last piece of lamb to be eaten, when completely full, in remembrance of the original Passover Lamb and in remembrance of our redemption from Egypt.



There exists today a remnant of the ancient people called the Samaritans, who live in northern Israel and Lebanon. Though they are not Jews, the Samaritans have been documented to practice many ancient Jewish customs, including Passover, basing their practices closely on the book of Exodus in the Scriptures and ancient traditions. Whether their Passover tradition is close to the Passover traditions practiced by the Jewish Community **before** the time of the Romans is

¹ All references to the Talmud are from The Schottenstein Edition, Talmud Bavli; Artscroll Series

not really known, and although it is definitely **not entirely consistent** with the Jewish traditions known to have developed by the middle of the First Century, **they do use Hebrew and Aramaic language prayers and certain known Jewish rites** including the Jewish Calendar dating. Their tradition therefore does provide some insight and is recounted as follows by the Samaritan High Priest Jacob ben Aaron (1840-1918) from writings he compiled toward the end of the 19th Century:

“The slaughtering takes place at twilight.... Real twilight is the space of two minutes after the actual going-down of the sun. This is the moment when the Paschal Sacrifice is slaughtered. When the slaughtering is finished, the people exchange greetings.... No bone is allowed to be broken, in accordance with the command of Exodus 12:9. The whole body of the lamb is placed on wooden spits, head downward...the priest takes unleavened bread, together with bitter herbs, and gives to each to eat. When night has fallen and the Evening Prayer has concluded, they come and remove the sacrificial meat from the oven. At that juncture, they have their loins girded, sandals on their feet, and staves in their hands, as ordained in Exodus 12:11. Each lamb is then taken apart, and when all have been thus dismembered; the congregation begins to recite hymns to a pleasing tune. These are composed in Aramaic and are the work of ancient sages.... Then they sit down to eat of the Paschal Sacrifice, doing so in haste. Each family eats separately, men and women apart. With the meat they partake of wafers of unleavened bread, together with bitter herbs.... Whatever is found next morning lying

over on the ground is gathered up and burnt on the alter.”²

Since the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the traditional Jewish Passover Seder has undergone some practical changes in its traditions.



According to Pesachim 119b the Mishnah portion states: “We may not conclude the seder meal, after eating the Passover offering, with afikoman”. Yet today we eat afikoman in the form of a small piece of matzah at the conclusion of our Seder meal. How did this come to be? Because of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, we no longer have the opportunity to make a Passover Sacrifice. Therefore, with no lamb, we instead use a small piece of matzah as a substitute for our remembrance of the Passover Lamb and to remember our Redemption.

This use of a small piece of matzah to remember a sacrifice is of course not new. Messiah Yeshua³ used a small piece of matzah as a token of remembrance concerning his sacrificial death at his last Passover Seder:

“...taking a piece of matzah, he made the blessing, broke it, gave it to them and said, ‘This is my body, which is being given for

² Passover, Its History and Traditions, Gaster, Pages 81-83

³ Yeshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus

you; do this in memory of me'. He did the same with the cup after the meal, saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant, ratified by my blood, which is being poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:19-20 JNT⁴)

Messiah Yeshua used a piece of matzah as a memorial of his sacrificial death to bring redemption from sin, but he also used the Third Cup of the Seder, which traditionally reminds us of the blood of the Passover Lamb, as a reminder of his blood which would bring about the New Covenant Jeremiah spoke of in his prophetic book in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jeremiah 31:31-34 speaks of the spiritual renewal of Israel that would come about through a New Covenant that God would bring which would be better than the Sinai Covenant because it would bring about complete forgiveness of sin. Yeshua said that his death ratified this New Covenant for Israel as well as for all the people of the World. Forgiveness of sins and a relationship with God are found today for anyone who will repent of their sin and by faith alone personally believe in Messiah Yeshua's sacrificial death for them.

At Passover, all of us as Jews will take a piece of matzah in remembrance of a lamb. But for us as Messianic Jews we take this piece of matzah in remembrance not just of the Passover Lamb from Egypt, but we take this matzah in remembrance of our ultimate Passover Lamb, Messiah Yeshua, who died as our sacrifice so that we could have forgiveness for our sins and a relationship with God.

⁴ This quote is from the Jewish New Testament, translated and published by David Stern

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In Remembrance of the Passover Lamb!

**Insights into a First Century
Seder**

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