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With the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., Judaism by necessity had to adapt to the fact that sacrifices could no longer be made. Unable to offer sacrifices to atone for sin, the rabbis suddenly needed to face a new reality if they wanted Judaism to survive.

According to legend, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai escaped from Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and established a rabbinic center of learning in the city of Yavneh on the southern coastal plain of Israel (b. Gittin 56b). From there, he and his fellow rabbis founded what is known today as rabbinic Judaism, which centered on the *Torah*[1] and rabbinic teachings rather than on the Temple sacrifices and political jurisdiction.

1 The Torah refers to the five books of Moses. Note that key terms are usually italicized at first mention (sometimes a second time) even if mentioned in earlier chapters, and are generally set in roman type thereafter. Many such terms can also be found in the index and glossary at the back of the book.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RABBINIC TRADITION

When studying the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, we must be careful not to serendipitously weave together first-century and twenty-first-century Jewish traditions. We must not attempt to read medieval or modern-day Jewish practices into the time of Jesus and the disciples. Ancient Jewish literature is a vast and complex field that is often difficult to understand and must be navigated carefully. A respectful and cautious use of Jewish writings, however, can provide an enriching lens to help us see the New Testament in light of its Jewish background.

To gain an insight into how the Feast of Passover was celebrated in Jesus's day, we must turn to the oldest historical evidence. The very early history of the celebration of Passover is difficult to reconstruct; our richest source of information is in the *Talmud*, which forms the core of Jewish law. The Talmud is made up of sixty-three tractates or sections that contain the (often divergent) opinions of thousands of rabbis on a large variety of subjects, including history, ethics, exegesis, traditional lore, and religious practice.

The central core of the Talmud is known as the *Mishnah*. Originally, rabbinic discussions of the Torah were transmitted orally and thus are known as the Oral Torah and seen as a revelation in their own right. These traditions were committed to writing by Rabbi Judah HaNasi[2] before his death around 220 C.E.[3] The rabbis quoted in the Mishnah are known as *Tannaim*, or "repeaters," because they repeated the memorized discussions of earlier rabbis. The Mishnah is concise in its language and contains many of the traditions of the Pharisees, a religious political party from the time of Jesus. Because

2 The term *HaNasi* means "the Prince," and is the title of this rabbi, indicating that he was a key leader of the Jewish community.

3 Judah Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," in *The Jews: Their History*, ed. Louis Finkelstein, 4th ed., 3 vols. (New York: Schocken, 1970–71), 1:170. Solomon Schechter and Wilhelm Bacher, "Judah I.," in *Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904), 7:333, accessed February 5, 2017. http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8963-judah-i.

of this, a critical reading of the Mishnah can give us an insight into how Passover was celebrated in Jesus's day.

A later commentary, the *Gemara*, recorded the attempts of subsequent rabbis to adapt the teachings of the Torah and the Mishnah into their life situation. Thus, the Gemara analyzes, expands upon, and explains the Mishnah. The rabbis quoted in the Gemara (200 to 500 C.E.) are known as *Amoraim*, or "those who say," because they talked about and expounded the teachings of the Oral Torah. Together, the Mishnah and Gemara make up the Talmud.

The Gemara actually exists in two independent compilations from the two main centers of Jewish scholarship: the Jerusalem Gemara, which forms the Jerusalem Talmud,[4] is dated 350 to 425 C.E., and the Babylonian Gemara, forming the Babylonian Talmud,[5] is dated around 500 C.E.[6] The Babylonian Talmud is much more extensive and is considered to be more authoritative regarding Jewish law; but the Jerusalem Talmud often gives us greater insight into practices in the land of Israel in the first century.

An entire tractate of the Talmud, Pesahim (lit., "Passovers"), is devoted to discussions on the Passover. The first four chapters of Pesahim address the laws of leaven, chapters 5–9 tell of the laws relating to the Passover Lamb, and chapter 10 describes the laws of the actual Passover *Seder*.[7] Scholars believe Pesahim to be

4 The Jerusalem Talmud, or *Talmud Yerushalmi* (i.e., the Gemara written in Israel), is the older and actually originates from the Galilee area (Tiberias and Caesarea) rather than from Jerusalem, and because of this is also known as the Palestinian Talmud. The Jerusalem Talmud is more difficult to read and is incomplete, only covering thirty-seven of the sixty-three tractates of the Mishnah.

5 The Babylonian Talmud, also known as the Talmud Bavli but usually referred to as just "The Talmud," reflects the discussions of the Jewish academies in the Mesopotamian cities of Pumbedita and Sura, in modern-day Iraq.

6 The date of the Babylonian Talmud is a matter of debate among scholars; opinions range from 500 to 700 C.E. For further discussion on the dating of the Talmud, see H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). See also Shmuel Safrai and Peter J. Tomson, eds., *The Literature of the Sages. First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

7 *Seder* means "order" and refers to the order of service followed in Passover celebrations.

the kernel of what later became the Passover *Haggadah*, which gives the precise order of the Passover Seder meal.

Between the seventh and eighth centuries, the *Geonim*, the Jewish sages in ancient Babylonia, compiled a version of the Passover observance on which today's Haggadah is based. Fragments of the ninth-century prayer book of Amram Gaon, a famous Jewish leader of the time, were found in the Cairo Genizah, a collection of more than three hundred thousand bits of ancient documents preserved by chance behind a wall of the Ben Ezra synagogue near Cairo, Egypt. These fragments, which date from 870 C.E. to the nineteenth century, contain the earliest known version of the Haggadah.[8]

Also in the Cairo Genizah we have the prayer book of Saadiah Gaon, one of the greatest Jewish sages of the tenth century, containing fragments of an additional Haggadah. At this early stage, many versions of the Haggadah existed, and it was not until the invention of the printing press in the late fifteenth century that the first printed Haggadah was produced and what we have come to know as the modern Passover Haggadah began to be standardized.

THE PASSOVER SACRIFICE

If we want to learn how Passover was celebrated between the Old and New Testaments, so we can gain an insight into how the feast was observed in the time of Jesus, we need to look at ancient historical records.

The observance of Passover was instituted in the Torah and consisted of eating the Passover lamb and unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The only rule that the Torah gives for the actual eating of the Passover lamb is found in Exodus 12:11:

8 For a masterful study of the Cairo Genizah, see S. D. Goitein and Paula Sanders (vol. 6, indexes), *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–93).

> Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD's Passover.

The rabbinic sages have considered this command to be applicable only to the first Passover, when the Israelites were fleeing Egypt. Passovers after that were to be festive occasions, celebrating the freedom that God had granted the Israelites and serving as opportunities for parents to instruct their children, reminding them of the story of the Exodus lest they forget that God brought them from slavery to freedom (Exod. 12:26–27; 13:8).[9]

After the closing of the Old Testament, the book of Jubilees,[10] reflecting practices at the latest one hundred years before Jesus, expands on the biblical commandment. Though it is not authoritative,[11] Jubilees nevertheless gives us an insight into how Passover was celebrated before the destruction of the Temple. Chapter 49 of the book mentions that "all Israel was eating the flesh of the paschal lamb, and drinking the wine, and was lauding and blessing, and giving thanks to the Lord God of their fathers . . ." (Jubilees 49:6).[12] Thus we see that the Passover lamb was still being sacrificed at this time.

The book of Jubilees also makes note of the passage in Deuteronomy 16:2 that states that once the Temple was established, the Passover sacrifice could only be offered there, as opposed to in individual homes:

> You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God from the

9 See also b. Pesahim 114 for discussion on *karpas*, or the vegetable.

10 Jubilees is part of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, an early extrabiblical source, and is dated at the latest as 100 B.C.E.

11 Jubilees is not considered part of the Bible by Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox Churches, but is considered canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as well as by Ethiopian Jews. For lists of the books in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, see appendix 1, "The Jewish and Protestant Canons of the Bible." The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches include additional books in their editions of the Bible.

12 See R. H. Charles, trans., *The Book of Jubilees; or The Little Genesis*, Translations of Early Documents (1902; repr., London: SPCK; New York: Macmillan, 1917), 208. For another translation, see Joseph B. Lumpkin, trans., *The Book of Jubilees, [or], The Little Genesis, The Apocalypse of Moses* (Blountsville, AL: Fifth Estate, 2006).

> flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name. (Deut. 16:2)

Jubilees highlights the changed nature of the Passover celebration:

> And they may not celebrate the passover in their cities, nor in any place save before the tabernacle of the Lord, or before His house where His name hath dwelt; and they will not go astray from the Lord." (Jubilees 49:21)[13]

Jewish people living far from the Temple would participate by sending their half-shekel Temple tax to Jerusalem by "sacred envoys" that represented their community, and celebrating Passover as a social occasion in the home or synagogue.[14] First-century Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus writes:

> Accordingly, on the occasion of the feast called Passover, at which they sacrifice from the ninth to the eleventh hour, and a little fraternity, as it were, gathers round each sacrifice, of not fewer than ten persons (feasting alone not being permitted), while the companies often included as many as twenty . . . . (*Jewish War* 6.423 [Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library])

The rabbis of the Mishnah (Tannaim) use similar language, referring to the observation of Passover as a fellowship, or in Hebrew, a *havurah*.[15] Many scholars believe the first-century Greek world influenced these early rabbis. These scholars view the first-century Passover Seder as an early rabbinic version of the Greek symposium, a dinner in the home in which people gathered to share sophisticated arguments over wine.[16] However, others argue that

13 Charles, *The Book of Jubilees; or The Little Genesis*, 211.

14 Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder*, 8.

15 See Aharon Oppenheimer, *The 'Am Ha-aretz: A Study in the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic-Roman Period*, trans. I. H. Levine, Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 118–56.

16 See, for example, Jordan D. Rosenblum, *Food and Identity in Early Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 167–69. See also Siegfried Stein, "The Influence of Symposia Literature on the Literary Form of the Pesaḥ Haggadah," *Journal*

these meals occurred in the synagogue instead, basing this on a passage from a first-century inscription found by archaeologists that refers to the synagogue as a location where communal meals took place.[17] Still other scholars see the Mishnah as taking pains to differentiate the Seder from the Greek symposium.[18] Whether the Seder was influenced by Greek practice or not, it is clear that by the first century, the celebration of Passover took place among groups of family members or friends. Thus, Jesus's Last Supper, a celebration of the Passover with His disciples, is in line with what we know of Jewish customs of the time.[19]

Scholarly opinions differ, however, as to the degree to which the mishnaic description of the Passover represents the observance of the feast during the time of Jesus, and how much was added subsequently, after the Temple's destruction in 70 C.E. Once sacrifices could no longer be offered, the sacrificial lamb was omitted and the Passover celebration by necessity reverted back to one in the home and synagogue, as older traditions were assigned new meanings to make up for the inability to offer sacrifices. One scholar has argued that while the Mishnah depicts pre-70 C.E. observances of Passover, their portrayal is biased by the rabbis' desire to maintain continuity with the past as the rabbinic leadership learned to cope with the catastrophic loss of the Temple.[20]

of Jewish Studies 8, no. 15 :(1957) 2–1.

17 See discussion on the Theodotos inscription in M. Martin, "Communal Meals in the Late Antique Synagogue," *Byzantina Australiensa* 15 (2004): 55, http://www.aabs.org.au/byzaust/byzaus15/, reprinted in M. Martin, "Communal Meals in the Late Antique Synagogue," in *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium*, edited by W. Mayer and S. Trzcionka, Byzantina Australiensia 15 (Brisbane: Australian Associate for Byzantine Studies, 2005), 135–46; see also Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), 54–56, 129.

18 Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder*, xiv.

19 For a discussion of Jesus's Last Supper with His disciples related to the celebration of Passover in the Gospel of Luke, see chapter 4, "Passover in the Gospel of Luke," by Darrell L. Bock. For a related discussion of the same in the Gospel of John, see chapter 5, "Passover in the Gospel of John," by Mitch Glaser.

20 Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder*, xiii.

THE FOUR CUPS

The first mention of the traditional four cups of wine to be taken during the Passover meal is found in the Mishnah. Because the Mishnah was written over many years, scholars have looked carefully at the various passages, trying to reconstruct the oldest depiction of the Seder. One talmudic scholar, Joseph Tabory, looking for the earliest core of the tradition, believes that the oldest passages are those that state a practice in the past tense, immediately followed by the present tense. Thus, he focuses on these passages and builds a detailed depiction of the oldest layer of the ceremony surrounding the eating of the Paschal lamb. Using those criteria, the passages listed below would be among the earliest passages describing the celebration of a Passover meal in the home or synagogue and can perhaps give us an insight into how Passover was celebrated in the time of Jesus. According to Tabory, the earliest sources show that the ceremony was originally organized around four cups of wine, and each cup had a text to be spoken along with it (emphasis added to verbs to show past versus present tense):

> They *poured* him [the leader of the Seder] the first cup . . . he *recites* the blessing for the day (v. 2).
>
> They *brought* him unleavened bread, lettuce, and haroset (fruit purée or relish) . . . they *bring* him the Paschal lamb (v. 3).
>
> They *poured* him the second cup, he *begins* with the disgrace (or: lowly status) [of our ancestors], and *concludes* with glory and he *expounds* the biblical passage "my father was a fugitive Aramean" until the end of the section (v. 4).
>
> They *poured* him the third cup; he *recites* the grace after meals (v. 5).
>
> The fourth [cup], he *recites* the *Hallel*,[21] and *says* over it the bless-

21 Psalms 113–118 are known as the *Hallel*. Some scholars have speculated that Psalms 77, 78, 105, and 106 may also have been recited during very early Passover

ing of the song (v. 8).[22]

The blessings over the first and third cups were also recited on nonfestival days, such as weekdays and the Sabbath. We know this is an early practice because in the Mishnah we see disagreements between Hillel and Shammai (two very famous and influential rabbis in the first century B.C.E.) about these weekday prayers, showing that they were in existence before the destruction of the Temple (see, e.g., m. Pesahim 10:2). However, the blessing over the second cup, after which the leader relates the story of Passover, and the fourth cup, the *Hallel* (or praise), are not part of the daily blessings, and were specifically added for the Passover.[23]

It was customary in mishnaic times, in the period before 220 C.E., to precede a festive meal with the serving of hors d'oeuvres, or what we practice today as the different dippings during the Seder (these are possibly the "dippings" referred to in Matthew 26:23 and John 13:26–30). This would explain the statement by Rabbi Nachman[24] in which he says that reclining was only necessary for two of the four cups of wine. The first two cups would be taken in an anteroom before the meal, and cups three and four would be taken after the meal, which was eaten in a reclining position. The majority of rabbis disagreed with Rabbi Nachman, and decreed that all four cups should be taken while reclining to the left, as reclining was associated with the notion of freedom, because only free men could drink in such comfort while slaves would have to stand to serve them (b. Pesahim 108a).

Baruch Bokser, who taught Talmud and rabbinical studies

celebrations. For example, see Judith Hauptman, "How Old Is the Haggadah?," *Judaism* 51, pt. 1 (2002): 9, http://www.globethics.net/gel/9770555.

22 These verses are taken from m. Pesahim 10, quoted in Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 6. For a discussion on the different methods of discerning dating in early Jewish exegesis, see David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 30 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1992).

23 Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, 7.

24 Rabbi Nachman bar Yaakov, usually known just as Rabbi Nachman, was one of the greatest sages of his time, part of the third generation of Amoraim, sages who wrote the Gemara in Babylon (b. Pesahim 108a).

at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, points out that the tradition of the four cups was given several additional meanings in the Talmud, citing these talmudic passages:

> Drawing on the example of Egypt: the four cups correspond to the four terms and dimensions of redemption used in Exodus 6:6–7.
>
> Drawing on the example of Joseph, an individual redeemed from prison: the four cups correspond to four instances that the cup is mentioned in conjunction with the cupbearer's dream.
>
> Drawing on the Daniel motif of four successive world empires: the four cups correspond to the four world empires, after which the kingdom of God will come.
>
> Drawing on the prophetic references to a cup: the four correspond to "four cups of retribution that the Holy One, praised be He, will give to the nations of the world to drink . . . and corresponding to them [i.e., the four cups of retribution], the Holy One, praised be He, will give Israel four cups of consolation to drink" (y. Pesahim 37b–c on Mishna 10:1).[25]

From these very early examples, we can see that the tradition of four cups taken at Passover can credibly be dated to the time of Jesus and could very well be the cups that Jesus mentioned at the Last Supper Passover celebration in Luke 22.

THE PASSOVER MEAL

After the destruction of the Temple, when sacrifices could no longer be offered, the lamb was replaced by an ordinary fes-

25 Quoted in Baruch M. Bokser, "Ritualizing the Seder," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 3 (1988): 456–57.

tive meal centered around the four cups described above, and the telling of the Passover story became the more central part of the celebration.

The festive meal itself consisted of lettuce, *charoset* (a sweet mixture), and "two cooked foods," as opposed to just one dish served in a regular meal (b. Pesahim 114b).[26] According to later tradition, after the writing of the Talmud, and following extensive rabbinic discussion, the "two cooked foods" became symbolic of the two sacrifices that could no longer be offered: the Paschal lamb, later represented by a shankbone, and the *hagigah* sacrifice,[27] later represented by a roasted egg. These two "dishes" were the minimum to be served at the Passover Seder; Rabbi Saadiah in the tenth century suggested four dishes, and today, many more are often served.[28]

The earliest mention of the requirements of the Passover meal were in a quote attributed to first-century Rabbi Gamaliel I,[29] who declared that whoever did not discuss *pesach* (the Passover sacrifice), *matzah* (the unleavened bread), and *maror* (the bitter herbs) during the meal did not fulfill his Passover duty (m. Pesahim 10:5). The Passover sacrifice was meant to remind the children of Israel of the "angel of death" passing over their homes in Egypt, the matzah reminded them of the hurry in which they left Egypt, and the maror of the bitterness of their lives as slaves.

Matzah

Bokser points out that whereas the Torah makes the *eating*

26 Babylonian Talmud Pesahim 114a does not specify the kind of vegetable to use for the "lettuce."

27 The *hagigah* was the additional festive offering that was to be brought by Jewish males to Jerusalem during the holidays of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. See more on this under the subheading "Hagigah" that follows.

28 Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, 12. For more on the foods prepared and dishes eaten during a traditional Passover Seder meal, see chapter 19, "Passover Foods and Recipes," by Mitch Forman.

29 Rabbi Gamaliel I (also spelled Gamliel), who is mentioned in the book of Acts, was a leading rabbi in the early first-century Sanhedrin, and grandson of the great Rabbi Hillel. He is known for advising his peers not to persecute the believers in Jesus, lest they possibly find themselves fighting against God (Acts 5:33–42).

of the Paschal lamb central, Rabbi Gamaliel elevates the matzah and maror to equal importance, so that the mere *mention* of them was deemed sufficient to fulfill the obligation, rather than the physical eating. The Gemara further increases the importance of the matzah and maror by specifying that these should be lifted up while they are being discussed, but forbidding the lifting of the representation of the sacrifice, lest a person appear to be eating a sacrifice outside of the Temple (b. Pesahim 116b).[30]

Bokser notes that in attempting to maintain the relevancy of the Passover meal in a post-Temple world, when a lamb could no longer be offered, the Mishnah elevates the significance of the matzah to a central place in the Passover observance. Thus, the rabbis portray the Passover sacrifice as important but not crucial, while the presence of matzah became essential. In other words, according to Bokser, the Mishnah's response to the Temple's destruction represents "resisting the trauma," or "working through the traumatic disruption to find a new basis for religious life."[31] Judaism, which had revolved around the Temple and its sacrifices, now needed another, more relevant focus.

As a side note, talmudic scholar Judith Hauptman has pointed out that women were actually given a crucial role in the talmudic observance of Passover, since they were entrusted with baking the Passover matzah, a process filled with very detailed and crucial regulations. Hauptman points out that in m. Pesahim 3:3–4, the careful instructions about baking matzah are stated in the feminine gender.[32] This is significant because if the matzah were not prepared correctly, both the men and women consuming it were liable to the punishment of *karet*, or being cut off from their people (m. Pesahim 3:5).

30 See also Bokser, "Ritualizing the Seder," 449–50.

31 Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder*, 2.

32 Judith Hauptman, "The Talmud's Women in Law and Narrative," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*, no. 28, no. 1 (2015): 37, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/nashim.issue-28.

Maror

According to the *Tosefta*,[33] even the poorest person in Israel was required to recline during the Seder (m. Tosefta 10:1).[34] However, because *maror* was eaten as part of the hors d'oeuvres, the eating of these bitter herbs did not require one to recline. Rashi[35] explains this in the eleventh century by pointing out that since reclining was a symbol of freedom, the maror, as a symbol of the bitterness of slavery, was not to be eaten while reclining (b. Pesahim 108a, 116a).

The Gemara discusses how the commandment of eating matzah and maror was fulfilled in the days of the Temple. Rabbi Hillel advocated eating them together in the form of a sandwich, to fulfill the passage in Numbers 9:11, "They shall eat it with unleavened bread [matzah] and bitter herbs [maror]," where both items (matzah and maror) appear together with just one verb ("shall eat") (b. Pesahim 115a). Other rabbis advocated eating them separately, so the compromise was made to first eat them separately, and then again together (Shulchan Aruch 475:1).[36] According to Rashi (eleventh century) and Maimonides (twelfth century),[37] the Hillel "sandwich" also included the Passover lamb before the destruction of the Temple when a sacrifice could still be made. While we do not know exactly how this was done at the time of Jesus, the Hillel sandwich today consists of matzah, maror, and charoset eaten together.

33 The *Tosefta*, meaning "supplement" or "addition," is a compilation of writings from the time of the Mishna (pre-220 C.E.) that are not included in the Mishna but appear as fragments in other rabbinic sources.

34 Joshua Kulp, "Mishnah Tosefta Pesahim," *Shiurim Online Beit Midrash*, accessed December 2, 2015, http://learn.conservativeyeshiva.org/haggadah-and-the-seder-0-mishnah-tosefta-pesahim, based on the Kaufman manuscript: http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/mishna/selectmi.asp.

35 Rashi is an abbreviation of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040–1105 C.E.), a medieval French rabbi who wrote extensive authoritative commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud.

36 Shulchan Aruch is known as the Code of Jewish Law. Joseph ben Ephraim Karo, *Code of Jewish Law* (קיצור שולחן ערוך)*: A Compilation of Jewish Laws and Customs*, comp. Solomon ben Joseph Ganzfried, trans. Hyman E. Goldin, rev. ed., 4 vols. (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1927).

37 Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) was a Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, physician, and astronomer, as well as a major influential Jewish scholar.

Charoset

While there is no mention in the Bible of *charoset*, the sweet apple mixture that is eaten at Passover, it is included in the Mishnah as part of the Passover observance, which means it was possibly a practice dating back to the time of Jesus. Rabbi Eleazar ben Zadok, a first-century rabbi, claimed that eating charoset at Passover was a *mitzvah*, i.e., a commandment. Because the Mishnah records both sides of rabbinic discussions, we know that the other sages of his time disagreed that it was a commandment, but did agree that it ought to be part of the observance of the Passover (m. Pesahim 10:3).

What exactly was charoset? The Mishnah mentions it, so we know it was part of the Passover tradition at least by the third century, but it does not tell us exactly what charoset was. It is only later, in the Babylonian Talmud, that we learn that it was a dip for the lettuce, and consisted of an apple mixture that resembled mortar, a reminder of the building materials used by the Israelite slaves in Egypt (b. Pesahim 115b, 116a). The rabbis of the Talmud also found symbolism not only in the appearance of the charoset but in the apple itself—one of the many traditional explanations was that an apple was eaten in remembrance of the Israelite women in Egypt. This is from a story in the Talmud that the Israelite women used to give birth under apple trees in Egypt to protect their newborns, thus continuing to experience God's blessing in the midst of persecution (b. Sotah 116a).[38]

The Jerusalem Talmud describes the charoset differently, noting that its consistency was more liquid, and thus was symbolic of blood (y. Pesahim 10:3, 37d.). Joseph Tabory, who authored the Jewish Publication Society commentary on the Haggadah,

38 Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov says that giving birth under the apple trees removed them "far from the notice of the Egyptians, who had decreed death on all newborn Jewish males." The Jewish sages explain, says Kitov, that unlike other fruit trees, the apple tree first produces its fruit and then its protective leaves; likewise the Israelite women, who concealed their pregnancies and gave birth in the fields, under the apple trees, trusting God to reveal Himself and protect them and their newborn children. Eliyahu Kitov, הגדה של פסח; *The Heritage Haggadah: With Laws, Customs, Traditions, and Commentary for the Seder Night*, trans. Gershon Robinson (1961; Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1999), 62–63.

offers several other interpretations, suggesting that the reminder referred to the blood of Israelite children killed by Pharaoh; or the shed blood leading to divine deliverance, symbolizing either the first or last plague; or the redemption brought by the blood of the lamb that was smeared on the doorposts of Israelite homes. Tabory notes further that eminent sixteenth-century talmudic scholar Rabbi Moses Isserles (1520–1572), as a compromise, concluded that the charoset should be thick, but red wine should be added in memory of the blood.[39] Essentially, however, we do not know how early the tradition of the charoset was practiced, or how it was understood at different points in time.

Hagigah

The *hagigah* was the voluntary offering that was to be made on the three main Israelite festivals: Passover (*Pesach*), the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (*Shavuot*) and the Feast of Booths (*Sukkot*). An entire tractate of the Talmud is devoted to the laws of the hagigah.

While the Temple stood, the hagigah was originally a separate sacrifice, at Passover eaten before the lamb, according to the rabbis, so that the Passover lamb would not be eaten in great hunger, lest a bone of the sacrifice be broken in the rush to satisfy one's hunger (y. Pesahim 6:4, 33c.). In a different passage, the rabbis suggest that the Passover sacrifice was to be eaten solely to obey the commandment of God, and must not be eaten to satisfy one's hunger at all (b. Pesahim 115a).

This posed a problem in that the Torah specified that none of the Passover lamb was to be left for the following day. In that case, the rabbis said, if the size of the group was small, there was to be no hagigah sacrifice, lest the Passover lamb not be entirely consumed because the people were already full.[40] We have no record in the New Testament of Jesus or His disciples specifically offering the hagigah sacrifice; however, Leviticus 23:8 does mention

39 Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, 8–9.
40 Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, 9–10.

a daily "offering by fire" to be made on each day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and we can assume that this sacrifice was being offered at the time of Jesus. After the destruction of the Temple, the hagigah came to be symbolized at Passover by a roasted egg, and is still part of the modern-day Passover celebration.

THE "FOUR SONS" AND THE CHANGING RABBINIC VIEWS OF REDEMPTION

A fundamental change had to be made in Judaism after the destruction of the Temple and the loss of national independence, as the traditional concept of redemption in the Passover—liberation from Egyptian bondage to the freedom of an independent nation—contradicted the daily reality of the Jewish people after 70 C.E. In order to reconcile the original meaning of Passover redemption with the reality of Jewish life once the Temple was destroyed, the rabbinic leadership chose to spiritualize the concept of divine redemption as potentially present in every Israelite's daily life.

The concept of redemption evolved in many directions among the three main branches of Judaism. Orthodox Judaism believes in a personal Messiah who will redeem humankind and usher in a Messianic era of peace, which will include an eventual resurrection of the dead.[41] Conservative Judaism generally believes more in a Messianic era (although some Conservative Jews still believe in a personal Messiah) in which humankind will be redeemed from the evils of this world. In this view, each individual has the responsibility to bring about the Messianic age through good deeds in this present life.[42] Reform Judaism,

41 See Moses Maimonides, "Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith." The twelfth principle asserts belief in the coming of the Messiah and the thirteenth speaks of the belief in the resurrection of the dead. For more on these principles, see Aryeh Kaplan, *Maimonides' Principles: The Fundamentals of Jewish Faith;* י"ג עקרים של הרמב"ם, 2nd ed. (New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth; Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1984).

42 The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, The Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of America, *Emet Ve'emunah* (אמת ואמונה): *Statement of*

the more liberal of the branches, believes that a personal Messiah is not needed, but rather that human beings will be redeemed by their own intellect, and will through their efforts bring about a Messianic era in which humanity will live in peace.[43]

The various rabbinic views of redemption evolved from a single event in history, the Exodus, to an experience affecting every Jewish person in every age, as well as something that would conceivably come in the distant future. The early transformation of the concept of redemption can be seen in the evolution of rabbinic interpretation regarding the "four sons."[44]

During the Passover Seder, four symbolic sons ask four different questions,[45] and the answers to those questions provide the structure for the retelling of the Passover story.

The *wise son* asks the meaning of the statutes that the Lord commanded Israel. The response is the telling of the story of the Exodus, the signs and wonders wrought by God, and the culmination in the commandments given by God to His people (Deut. 6:20–25).

The *simple son* merely asks, "What is this?" In response, he is told the story of the slaying of the firstborn of the Egyptians, and the redemption of the firstborn among the Israelites (Exod. 13:11–16). There is also a *son who does not know how to ask*, and who is given a similar answer (Exod. 13:8).

The *wicked son*, however, asks, "What does this mean to *you*?" (Exod. 12:21–28; esp. v. 26). It is the (later) talmudic mention of the wicked son's question that displays a small but significant change in interpretation. An early commentary, the *Mekhilta*,[46] says:

Principles of Conservative Judaism (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1988), 28–32.

43 See Union of American Hebrew Congregations, *Reform-Liberal-Progressive Judaism: Its Ideals and Concepts, as Set Forth in the Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1937).

44 See also the discussion on the Four Nights in Targum Neofiti in Clemens Leonhard, *The Jewish Pesach and the Origins of the Christian Easter: Open Questions in Current Research*, Studia Judaica 35 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

45 These were originally three questions, based on three Torah passages: Exodus 12:26–27; 13:14–15; and Deuteronomy 6:20–23.

46 The *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* is a rabbinic commentary to the book of Exodus; the identity of its author, "Rabbi Ishmael," is a subject of debate among scholars. Its date, also difficult to establish, is estimated to be some time in the

> Because he excludes himself from the group, you also should exclude him from the group, and say unto him: "It is because of that which the Lord did for me" (v. 8)—for me but not for you. Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed. (Mekhilta on Exod. 12:26)[47]

The Jerusalem Talmud adds an interesting nuance:

> The wicked son, what does he say? "What mean you by this service?" (Exod. 12:26) What is this bother that you have troubled us with each and every year? Because he excludes himself from the group, you also should say to him: "It is because of that which the Lord did for me" (v. 8)—for me but He did not do for "that man" (the wicked son). Had "that man" been in Egypt, he would not have been fit to be redeemed from there ever. (y. Pesahim 10, 37)[48]

The Jerusalem Talmud declares that by asking in this way, this wicked son has removed himself from the community, thereby excluding himself from Israel's redemption as well. A *beraita*[49] in the Jerusalem Talmud says, "If that person had been in Egypt, he would never have been worthy to be redeemed from there."[50] In saying this, the Jerusalem Talmud differs from other rabbinic writings, making the redemption from Egypt conditional upon the worthiness of the recipient. This is key, because in doing so it then empowers every single Israelite with the ability to choose

third or fourth centuries. For more on the Mekhilta, see Jacob Z. Lauterbach, trans., *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition on the Basis of the Manuscripts and Early Editions with an English Translation, Introduction and Notes*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., JPS Classic Reissues (1933–35; repr., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2004).

47 Quoted from Mordechai Silverstein, trans., "The Four Sons of the Haggadah—Introduction to Rabbinic Midrash," *Shiurim Online Beit Midrash*, accessed December 2, 2015, http://learn.conservativeyeshiva.org/introduction-to-rabbinic-midrash-10-lesson-10-the-four-sons-of-the-haggadah.

48 Quoted from Silverstein, "The Four Sons of the Haggadah."

49 A *beraita* is a rabbinic quote from the mishnaic period that was not included in the Mishna but was quoted by later sources.

50 See Fred O. Francis, "The Baraita of the Four Sons," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42, no. 2 (1974): 280–97.

to become worthy of redemption if they are careful to obey the commandments.

This *beraita*, although not grounded in Scripture, reflected the common rabbinic perception of life. Faced with the absence of the Temple and the reality of life under Roman rule, the rabbis of the Jerusalem Talmud provided a way for each individual to merit spiritual, and not political, redemption.[51]

After all four sons ask their questions, the Mishnah states that the father is to begin his answer with the humiliation faced by the wandering Aramean, and to finish with the redemption from Egypt (m. Pesahim 10:4; b. Pesahim 116a). In its reference to Joshua 24:2–4, where Joshua refers to God taking Abraham from idolatry to belief in Himself, the Jerusalem Talmud is continuing to reinterpret redemption in a spiritual manner, as meaning to go from idolatry to belief in the one true God. Thus once again the Jerusalem Talmud spiritualizes the concept of redemption, to make it relevant to every person in every generation as part of Judaism's reinvention of itself following the destruction of the Temple.

In addition, in closing with the *Hallel* praise psalms, the participants in the Passover meal give praise to God for bringing them as individuals from idolatry into true worship, thus making the concept of redemption relevant no matter what the physical reality of the Jewish people might have been.[52]

After the loss of the Temple and the sacrificial system, Passover in rabbinic teachings was transformed from a celebration centered on the sacrifice of the Lamb, to a home celebration. This shift recreated the holiday as a teaching tool reminding individual Jewish people and families of the importance of being faithful to the one true God and rejecting idolatry, that one might merit a future redemption of a more spiritual nature. Thus, the Jerusalem Talmud and other early rabbinic writings, through their reinterpretation of the Passover, recast redemption from merely a historic experience to a more spiritual reality available to those within the Jewish community who were loyal

51 See Francis, "The Baraita of the Four Sons."

52 Baruch M. Bokser, "Changing Views of Passover and the Meaning of Redemption According to the Palestinian Talmud," *AJS Review* 10, no. 1 (1985): 11–12.

to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This background could well have created the atmosphere within first-century Judaism enabling the Jewish faithful standing on the banks of the Jordan River to grasp the truth of John's testimony, that a greater redemption had now come through Jesus, the Lamb of God and Messiah who had come to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Passover, both in Scripture and rabbinic tradition, from the first century onward pointed the Jewish community towards a greater Messianic hope. The question the Jewish people needed to answer both then and now is whether or not Jesus embodies this hope.