



**April 24, 2024**

# MESSENGER

## QUOTE FOR TODAY

"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live."  
Psalm 146:1,2

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## Passover 2024

The Jewish **Passover** commemoration began on Monday night and will continue through next Tuesday.<sup>1</sup> I wondered how this year's celebration would be affected by the current events related to the conflict in Gaza, so I checked out what was being posted on-line. The two opinions that jumped out at me, both by American-born Jews, were total contrasts. Off course, each of them launched their articles by referring to the original Biblical story of God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from 400 years of slavery in Egypt through what is known as the Exodus, but how they applied these historical lessons to today's realities were totally different.

Rabbi Elliot Kukla entitled his article, "Why I'll Be Observing Passover Differently This Year."<sup>2</sup> He tells about the very first Passover celebrated by his family: "My father stood up and began to tell the Passover story with the words 'All who are hungry come and eat.' At that moment, I fell in love with Judaism. I loved the drama, sure—but also the underlying message of fairness. . . . Now, every year of my adult life, I lead my own seder. I have been proud to hold up a bumpy square of unleavened bread to symbolically welcome the hungry. With joy, I have taught my child that this is the heart of both Passover and Judaism." But this year, he laments, he is tortured by the fact that the Nation of Israel, by overreacting to the October 7 attack from Gaza by Hamas, are responsible for the starvation of thousands of Palestinian children.

*The Traveling Clatt* is the on-line name of a young man, a very observant Jew, who has, over the past few years, made a series of very informative videos of Jewish communities around the world. His take on the special significance of this year's Passover celebration also focuses on the current conflict between Israel and Gaza.<sup>3</sup> He sees "many sources of adversity" ganging up on Israel, including "the attack from Iran, the threat of Hezbollah in the north, the violence of Hamas in the south, who still hold 130 hostages," together with "unbalanced criticism of the success of Israel's very small military response." His perspective is that "this land has been given to us by God, and, in the end, no one will be able to take it away from us." He clearly believes that it is Israel's destiny to be in total control of all the territory God gave to them after the Exodus.

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As a *Christian*, I have a different perspective on Passover. It was during the celebration of this holiday that Jesus was rejected by his own people. His last meeting with his disciples was at their Passover meal together.<sup>4</sup> Then he was arrested, tortured and executed on a Cross. After his Resurrection, his followers met regularly for The Lord's Supper, which is a reenactment of Passover. The Apostle Paul made this clear when he referred to Jesus Christ as the "Passover Lamb."<sup>5</sup> So, we Christians believe that we still celebrate the Passover when we regularly come together at The Lord's Table, or Communion.<sup>6</sup>

But also, as a *Christian*, I have always had love for Jewish people and a warm place in my heart for Israel as a Nation. This comes from the fact that they were the original people God chose as the vehicle for his special revelation, first through Abraham and Moses in the Old Covenant, and then through Jesus Christ, His Son, in the New Covenant. It also comes from my sense of shared responsibility for all the anti-Semitism my Christian ancestors have laid on Jewish people throughout history, culminating in the awful genocide of the World War II Holocaust.

My sadness is that I feel myself losing some of that empathy, as it begins to dawn on me that hard-line Jews can be just as cruel and vengeful as those who have been their persecutors. I don't know what to do with this.

Pastor George Van Alstine

1 For a step-by-step description of what happens at a traditional Passover meal, see [https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach\\_cdo/aid/116793/jewish/Passover-Seder-Step-by-Step.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/116793/jewish/Passover-Seder-Step-by-Step.htm)

2 <https://time.com/6969807/passover-israel-gaza-essay/> "Why I'll Be Observing Passover Differently This Year," by Elliot Kukla, posted 4/22/24. Rabbi Kukla is a member of the Jewish Voice for Peace, an organization supporting a "two-state" solution for the unresolved tensions between Jews and Palestinians in Israel.

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yh2mpr50clk&t=468s>

"What Passover REALLY Means This Year in ISRAEL," posted 4/33/24.

4 Matthew 26:17-20; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20.

5 1 Corinthians 15:7.

6 There are many elaborate prophetic teachings about the end-time restoration of Israel, all based on very questionable Biblical interpretation. One thing for sure, you can discount any teaching that Temple worship will be restored, with the sacrifice of specially bred "red heifers." That would be a denial of the clear New Testament teaching that Christ's coming meant a "New Covenant" was being established and the "Old Covenant" was no longer in force.