

UPCOMING FEASTS CENTRAL TO JEWISH, CHRISTIAN FAITHS PASSOVER INCLUDES UNIQUE RITUALS

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

It's a wonderful time and a happy time.

That's how Cantor William Lieberman of the B'nai Aviv of Weston synagogue feels about the Passover holiday.

"It's the holiday I remember most as a child," he said. "We have so many rich traditions relating to the family, prayers, songs and food."

Passover is one of the Jewish faith's three pilgrimage festivals," Lieberman explained. "It commemorates the exodus of the Jews from Egypt when the Jews were slaves of the Pharaoh of Egypt. It commemorates the freedom of the Israelites.

Lieberman said that Jewish people celebrate the holiday in three ways.

First, "It's a pilgrimage festival when many Jews go to Israel and visit the Western Wall, the site of the original temple," he said. "This is one way that the Bible describes how Jews commemorate the Passover,"

Second, Jews also go to the synagogue and take part in the chanting of the liturgy and the offering of prayers. It is an eight day festival when we become closer to God and to our history."

Lieberman said that the people read special portions of the Torah, or the five books of Moses, and hear special talks about this part of their history.

Third, faithful Jews participate in Passover Seders. Lieberman describes the Seder as "an order that is prescribed in the Haggadah, or the tradition of the celebration."

In a Seder, often celebrated at home but also offered in Synagogues, participants read portions of history, they sing special songs for the occasion, they participate in family customs, and they feast on special foods.

"Many families have their own traditions and they are very rich," Lieberman explained. "The purpose is to instill the traditions in our young people and to pass those traditions along."

The dining room table becomes a place of worship at Passover according to Rabbi Robert P. Frazin of Temple Solel in Hollywood. "The family begins each Sabbath by lighting candles at home and it is there that they understand God's divine providence," he explained.

That providence is evident in the symbols used at the Passover Seder, Frazin said. “The symbols include the unleavened bread that represent the Jewish people’s fast exit from Egypt, not allowing any time for the bread to rise and bitter herbs that represent their bitter exile in Egypt,” he said.

“Passover is a joyful family time to be together,” Frazin said.

Lieberman described the days and weeks before Passover as an exciting time that builds up toward the holiday. “People prepare several foods and get ready for their traditions.”

One traditional food is the Matzo or bread that contains certain ingredients specified for the holiday. “We also use special plates and dishes to serve the Passover food, so in the weeks before the holiday we go through a type of ‘spring cleaning’ where we put away our regular dishes and get out the dishes and utensils that we will use for Passover.”

Many synagogues will hold special services during the holiday period that this year begins at sundown on April 5 and ends at sunset on April 13.

“Often, the first two days are observed at home, though our synagogue will offer some services those evenings,” Lieberman said.

Among the service times at B'nai Aviv of Weston are special observances set for 9:15 a.m. on April 6 and 7, on April 9 at 6:30 p.m., and on April 10, 12 and 13 at 9:15 a.m. The synagogue is located at 1410 Weston Trace in Weston.

“Passover ends at sundown on Tuesday (April 13) and after that we will be able to eat normal foods.

Many synagogues will be holding special services, including a Seder at Temple Beth Emet at 4807 South Flamingo Road in Cooper City. That observance will be at 6 p.m. on April 6.

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PASSOVER INCLUDES UNIQUE RITUALS, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, Apr 4, 2004