

OBSERVER/FAITH & REASON

WALKING THE TALK

Children's questions at heart of Passover

ELIEZER SEGAL
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

At first glance, it seems like a trivial, even silly custom. A broken piece of matzah (the unleavened bread that is the staple dietary item of the Jewish Passover) is set aside and hidden somewhere.

In some families, the parents are the ones who conceal the matzah and the children are responsible for finding it. In others, the youngsters purloin it and later ransom it in exchange for gifts.

The practice of matzah-snatching is recorded in ancient Jewish documents, where it is given a rationale remarkable in its simplicity: "To keep the children from falling asleep."

The concern with keeping children actively involved in the Passover celebration is reinforced in several customs. Ultimately, it is the children who define the special character of Passover within the spectrum of Jewish values and observances.

If Passover was merely a historical commemoration of the liberation of the ancient Hebrews, it would be difficult to justify it as an annual festival. After all, the motifs of slavery and liberation permeate every aspect of the Jewish experience.

The Torah invokes that memory of slavery and liberation in diverse contexts, such as when commanding the compassionate treatment of strangers or observance of a weekly day of rest.

Verbal mentions of the Exodus from Egypt are incorporated into the standard prayers repeated each day.

If these memories accompany the Jew through every moment and situation, what need is there for an additional holiday devoted to the same theme?

Clearly, what is unique to Passover is its association with the precept set down in Exodus 13:8: "And you shall tell your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'"

As children are exposed to the numerous profound and exotic customs of the holiday, their curiosity is expected to provoke questions about the underlying meaning of the customs.

We may, therefore, appreciate how important it is that the telling of the Exodus story be initiated with the youngest people present asking: "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

Jewish tradition assumes the message of Passover cannot be transmitted in a uniform version. Rather, every child must be addressed in his or her individuality. There are self-motivated, gifted children for whom a slight nudge of parental guidance is enough to set them in the proper direction of independent learning and appreciation.

However, other children challenge the tradition with a rebellious hostility, requiring a forceful or confrontational response.

Then there are those children who do not even realize there are questions to be asked. Jewish tradition insists in such cases the parent or educator must initiate the conversation, so the children will be able to partake in the historical memory of their people.

When it comes to instilling religious values, it is not enough to recite texts and facts mechanically.

The Passover ritual includes a tangible re-enactment of the story through the use of symbolic foods, actions and other means, allowing participants to experience the degradations of slavery and the exhilaration of freedom. It is assumed throughout that only those who have experienced oppression can truly appreciate the value of liberty.

This is a message that bears repeating, as many people no longer appreciate how precious freedom is.

Passover holds some universal lessons for the numerous cultural and religious communities that contribute to the tapestry of our society.

The beauty and wisdom of these cultures will not survive into the next generation without an intense commitment from their present custodians.

Without this determination, they will continue to be blended into the shallow, globalized mush overtaking us every day.

The successful transmission of our memories and values to the next generation demands that we actively engage the spirits and minds.

As a society, we will be unforgivably impoverished if we fail to keep our children from falling asleep at the table.

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Easter foods, facts and fun



THE POP GOSPEL

DAVID BUCKNA
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

1 How did the day commemorating Christ's crucifixion by Roman soldiers in Jerusalem come to be called Good Friday?

2 The Stations (or Way) of the Cross began when early pilgrims followed the traditional route Jesus walked to His execution. How many of the 14 stations are not mentioned in scripture?

3 What snack food originated circa 610 AD as a Lenten food?

4 The ancient Greeks ate cross-marked cakes associated with the goddess Diana. But tradition says the Christian custom of eating hot crossed buns began in 1361. In what country?

5 What Protestant sect held the first documented Easter sunrise service in 1732?

6 What famous oratorio was first performed in Dublin April 13, 1742?

7 What flower did Louis Houghton first bring to the southern coast of Oregon in 1919?

8 In the 1951 drama, *Hill Number One*, James Dean gave his first TV performance. Whom did he play?

9 What Canadian town is home to the world's largest Easter egg?

10 One of the episodes in the animated series *The Greatest Adventure: Stories From the Bible* is *The Easter Story*. Who was the executive producer of the series — Hanna-Barbera, Walt Disney or Charles Schultz?

FOR COMMENTS, OR TO SUGGEST QUESTIONS, E-MAIL SOLOMANN@LOOK.CA

Answers

1 Some scholars suggest Good Friday is a corruption of God's Friday. Others say it's "good" because Jesus's death is regarded as the perfect sacrifice, reconciling God and mankind.

2 Five: Jesus falls the first time under the weight of his cross; Jesus meets his mother, Mary; Jesus has his face wiped by Veronica; Jesus falls a second time; Jesus falls a third time. Pilgrims visited scenes from Christ's suffering in Jerusalem along the Via

Dolorosa (Way of Sorrows) as early as the third century. The stations arose from oral tradition by the 11th. The first stations in local churches came in the 15th. In 1731, Pope Clement XII fixed the number of stations at 14.

3 Pretzels. A German monk was preparing unleavened bread for Lent, the 40-day fast before Easter. As Christians then prayed with their arms folded across their chests, the thought came to him to twist dough into that shape, as treats for children to recite prayers. He named them pretzels — Latin for "little reward."

4 England. Monks at St. Alban's Abbey first baked hot crossed buns for the poor.

5 Moravians in Hernhut, Saxony. They visited a cemetery called God's Acre at sunrise, in memory of the women who visited Christ's tomb the first Easter morning.

6 Messiah, a piece first associated with Easter, not Christmas.

George Frederick Handel wrote Messiah in 24 days without once leaving his house, something musicologist Newman Flower called "the greatest feat in the history of musical composition." While Handel was working on the Hallelujah Chorus, his servant found him in tears, exclaiming, "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God Himself!"

7 The Bermuda or Easter lily. Houghton, a First World War soldier, brought a suitcase full of bulbs to Oregon. By 1945, more than 1,200 growers were producing them commercially. More than 11 million bulbs are now grown yearly.

8 The apostle John. Although his role was minor, one of Dean's lines was not: "He is risen!"

Hill Number One was an Easter special of the TV series *Family Theater* (www.familytheater.org). It opens on a Korean battlefield on Easter Sunday. While American GIs fight for Hill Number 46, the padre reminds them of Hill Number One — taken by one man 2,000 years ago.

9 Vegreville, Alta. University of Utah's Ronald Resch had to write a new computer program to design the 900-kilogram gold, bronze and silver egg. It measures eight metres long, six metres wide and 10 metres high.

10 William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. In *The Greatest Adventure* series, events are seen through the eyes of three teens who travel back in time.

Knowledge level:
0-1 kindergarten
2-3 primary
4-5 intermediate
6-7 secondary
8-9 college/university
10 You're as wise as Solomon.

KEEPING THE FAITH

COMPILED BY JOE WOODARD
CALGARY HERALD

Feasts of the week

■ Sunday is Easter, according to the calendar of Western Christianity; the feast commemorating the resurrection from death of Jesus of Nazareth, after his execution by Roman soldiers two days earlier.

■ According to the calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, Sunday is Palm Sunday, with Holy Thursday and Good Friday coming later next week.

■ Monday begins the 12-day Baha'i feast of Ridvan (Ris-wahn), commemorating Baha'u'llah's exile in Baghdad; at this time he proclaimed himself to be the "promised one," foretold by the prophet the Bab.

Prayer concert Easter evening

Looking for a new way to celebrate Easter?

Calgary Concerts of Prayer is sponsoring a citywide, interdenominational prayer rally on Resurrection Sunday evening.

"We've asked pastors from around the city to lead us in different prayer segments; there'll be an order of service," said Concerts of Prayer organizer John Teibe.

"We'll begin with what's in front of us — our city, our churches, our leadership. Then we'll move into the spiritual, social, physical and emotional issues — the war, SARS, missions, the persecuted church — and we'll pray for the unity of the church, for a strong intercessory spirit, for ministries like the Mustard Seed, Inn from the Cold, the poor and needy."

The rally will be held at Grace Baptist Church, 2670 Radcliffe Dr. S.E. (south on 28th Street off Memorial Drive), Sunday at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

FROM OS9 HISTORY

"After one year, I made our payroll entirely from our receipts," Doull said.

Yet, the project remains an act of faith, both in Christ's historical resurrection and in the church's contemporary resurrection.

So far, the project has been funded entirely by the Calgary oilpatch, to the tune of \$4.3 million from 40 investors. Yet, the original business plan called for a \$5.5-million partnership to cover production through Volume 5, at which point sales should cover further volume costs. So for now, Doull is still faithfully hunting for investors.

Loyola University Chicago historian Dennis Martin, another project consultant, insists the Christian History Project is crucial for two reasons.

First, Martin said, the century-old "split between narrative journalism and academic history has always been a mis-

King's Fold benefit to fund chapel

To celebrate its 25th year, the King's Fold Retreat House has begun construction of its long-awaited chapel, to be dedicated next Thanksgiving.

To finance the chapel, King's Fold will be holding a dessert theatre benefit early next month.

A half-hour northwest of Cochrane on Highway 40, King's Fold can accommodate 35 people in group or individual retreats. One of just four local retreat houses, it has welcomed pilgrims from 20 denominations.

"There's been a great increase in interest in retreats over the last decade," says director Virgil Stauffer.

The benefit, May 10, will feature homemade desserts, a silent auction and a performance by the Rosebud Theatre troupe of *Steps of a Pilgrim*, a play based on the lives of Ruth and Billy Graham. Tickets are \$25, available at Christian Publications.

For information about King's Fold group and individual retreats (such as its three prayer-and-fasting cabins, one a tree house), call 932-3174.

Baha'is invite all to Ridvan party

The Baha'i Community of Calgary will elect its local governing body at its annual meeting Sunday. This will be followed by the 12-day feast of Ridvan, beginning Monday.

Baha'i communities are governed by local and national administrative institutions, elected yearly by the membership.

The public is welcome at the First (Monday) and Twelfth Day (Friday, May 2) celebrations of the 12-day feast of Ridvan, commemorating Baha'u'llah's 1863 announcement in Baghdad that he was the Promised One — the Manifestation of God foretold by the prophet the Bab.

Ridvan will be celebrated at the Scandinavian Centre, 739 20th Ave. N.W., on Monday at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome. For information, call the Baha'i Office at 278-7307 or e-mail admin@calgary-bahai.org

take." By putting academically accurate history into a readable format, Byfield is creating "outstanding narratives."

Second, Martin says, he has been "tracking certain markers" of pending persecution for almost a decade:

"Things like the criminalization of Christian beliefs about sexuality, the denial of civil rights to anti-abortion protesters, the criticism of the Bible as racist..." Martin said Christians need to know where, historically speaking, they now stand.

"Until a century ago, people who didn't believe in God still believed in truth and the laws of nature," he said.

"But today, our culture is dominated by the denial of truth. That means we no longer have any faith in reason and consensus. That brings everything down to power relations. And anyone who believes in an objective moral order automatically becomes the enemy of those who don't."

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Today

■ Partners In Christ Fellowship Easter Celebration, 3 p.m., guest speaker Pastor John Lucas of Immanuel Church, Rocky Mountain College, 4309 Brentwood Rd. N.W. Call Brother Marcos at 275-0394. Refreshments served after the service.

■ St. Paul's Anglican Church, 7 Sunmills Gr. S.E., Easter vigil and baptism, 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 20

■ Ecumenical Easter sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. Park at Foster's Funeral Home, 3220 4th St. N.E. for a 45-minute service at Queen's Park Cemetery.

■ St. Matthew's United Church, 2039 26A St. S.W., sunrise service at 7 a.m., followed by breakfast, communion at 10:30 a.m., coffee and a children's Easter egg hunt, Call 249-1721.

■ St. Paul's Anglican Church, 7 Sunmills Gr. S.E., Holy Eucharist, 9 and 11 a.m.

■ Bethel United Reformed Church, 730 101st St. S.W., Rev. Edward Marcusse on Luke 24, Opened Eyes for Easter, 9:30 a.m. Visit www.bethelurc.org or call 249-9971.

■ Resurrection Lutheran Church, 1102 37th St. S.E., German Easter service, 9:30 a.m. and English service, 11 a.m.

■ Eckankar, Religion of the Light and Sound of God, presents God Speaks to you Often Throughout the Day... Do You Hear? 10 a.m., Glenbrook Community Hall, 3524 45th St. S.W. Call 287-8712.

■ Midlands United Church, 250 146th Ave. S.E., Easter Sunday, 10:30 a.m. Call 256-1420.

■ Unitarian Church of Calgary, 1703 1st St. N.W., Resurrection Happens, an intergenerational Easter service, 10:30 a.m. Visit www.unitarianscalgary.org.

■ Rose Garden Church presents Resurrection Sunday celebration, praise through song, dance and drama, 2 p.m. at Olympic Plaza.

Forthcoming

■ Spiritual Directions, 150 1402 8th Ave. N.W., Full of Laughter Poetry workshop, Monday, April 21, 7 to 9 p.m. Cost: \$10. Call

210-2802 or visit www.spiritualdirections.com.

■ FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219 19th Ave. S.W., Intro to Christian Meditation, with Engeline Piet, Tuesday, April 22, 7 to 9 p.m. Call 228-4215.

■ Spiritual Directions, 150 1402 8th Ave. N.W., Healing Our Losses: healing the pain of transitional times, Tuesday, April 22, 7 to 9:30 p.m., for six sessions. Cost: \$145. Call 210-2802 or visit www.spiritualdirections.com.

■ Knox United Church, 506 4th St. S.W., Easter: Celebrate Life Renewed, with Stewart Ramsay-Mills, Wednesday, April 23, 7 to 9 p.m. Call Lorraine at 266-6450.

■ West Calgary Full Gospel Church, 8339 Bowness Rd. N.W., Music and Ministry with Anita Pearce, Wednesday, April 23, 7:30 p.m. Call 288-3337.

■ Mystic Cafe presents God Touch: music, poetry and art to relax and engage the senses, Friday, April 25, 7 to 11 p.m., at Nellie's, 1414 Kensington Rd. N.W. Call 275-9705 or visit www.wildhoneycentre.com.

■ Bible conference on the Last Days at the Blackfoot Inn, 5940 Blackfoot Tr. S.E., Friday, April 25, 7 to 10 p.m. and Saturday, April 26, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free will offering. Call 948-5401, e-mail ldmitch@telusplanet.net or visit www.welcome.to.tosmith.

■ First Lutheran Church, Strathcona, 7102 14th Ave. S.W., garage sale, Saturday, April 26, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

■ St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, 1423 8th Ave. S.E., Malawi AIDS Orphans Fundraiser, Saturday, April 26, 7 p.m. Tickets: \$5, adults, free for children 12 and under.

■ Standard Ladies' Prayer Group's annual gospel music night, Saturday, April 26, 7 p.m., at Immanuel Assembly of God Church, 17th Ave. and 1st Street S.W. Tickets: \$10, in advance or \$12 at the door. Call Vi at 235-0074 or Lonnie at 245-4803.

■ Rebecca Levant's benefit concert for Cathedral Church's Inn From the Cold and Sudanese Dinka Youth Program, Saturday, April 26, 8 p.m., at Cathedral Church of the Redeemer, 7th Ave. and 1st Street

S.E. Tickets: \$12, at the door or call 269-1905.

■ The Baha'i Community of Calgary presents a Spiritual 5K Walk-A-Thon for Body and Soul, rain or shine, Sunday, April 27 at 9 a.m. Start and finish at Shaganappi Hall and Tennis Club, 2608 14th Ave. S.W. Refreshments and prayers at 11 a.m. For free registration and more info, call 208-1299.

■ Augustana University College's Concert Choir performs Monday, April 28, 7:30 p.m., at Lutheran Church of the Cross, 10620 Elbow Dr. S.W. Call 255-4792.

■ Adult Singles Ministry, Recognizing and Dealing with Abuse, with John McCubbin, Monday, April 28, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., at Knox United Church, 506 4th St. S.W. Cost: \$1, members; \$3, non-members. Call 276-2551.

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