

## THE PASSOVER MEALS AND GREEK *SYMPOSIA*\*

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### Resum

Segons la Torà hi ha un sol i únic ritual per a celebrar la Pasqua en el Temple. Però és difícil imaginar com s'ho feien els que, ni un mes després, no podien accedir per les raons que fos a Jerusalem. Hem de suposar alguna mena de celebració familiar. El tractat mixnic sobre la Pasqua (Pes 10) a finals del segle II dC, d'altra banda, ofereix un ceremonial familiar molt elaborat i fins i tot complicat. L'article vol explicar, primer, com i per què «podien» menjar l'anyell pasqual al segle I després de la destrucció del Temple. L'autor mostra també, seguint S. Stein, l'impacte dels simposis hel·lenísticoromans en la redacció del Seder mixnic. Així es clarifica el significat de '*afiqimon* (o '*afiqomon*), maltractat tant en les interpretacions de tradició jueva com en les traduccions més conegudes de la Mixnà.

**Paraules clau:** Seder, Pesah, *Symposia*, '*afiqomon*, Hel·lenisme.

### Abstract

*According to the Torah there was only one ritual way to celebrate the Passover Festival in the Temple. But how do we imagine families who even after a month after the official celebration would not be able to travel to Jerusalem for some reason or another? We are to suppose some kind of celebration in every one's house. The mishnaic Seder Pesah, on the contrary, is an elaborated and even complicated Paschal ceremonial coming from the end of second century CE. The article wants to*

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*explain first, how and why could they eat sacrificial meat even after the Temple's destruction. The author tries also to show the Greek Symposium's influence over the Seder. So that the difficult 'afiqomon (or 'afiqomon) of the Seder receives new light.*

**Keywords:** *Seder, Pesah, Symposia, 'afiqomon, Hellenism.*

## 1. CELEBRATION OF EASTER BEFORE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

We do not intend to dwell on the problems of the origin of the feast of the Passover (farmers or shepherds?), neither on the account of it in the Torah nor on the legislation describing the difficulties of its ritual. But we do note that according to the Torah there is a ritual from which no-one can escape, not even those who cannot celebrate it on the date prescribed because of being in a state of impurity or because they are travelling. Such individuals as well as any foreigners who find themselves in Israel must follow the same ritual as the Jew who does not have these difficulties, even if it means celebrating Passover a month later. So in Nm 9, 12s: «it shall be held in accordance with the Passover ritual», כְּכֹל-חֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ. The text insists that: the foreigner must hold Passover according to the ritual and the Passover prescriptions, חֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח וּבְמִשְׁפָּטוֹ; «you will have one law for alien and citizen alike», חֻקָּה אֶחָת יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וּלְגֵר וּלְאִזְרָה הָאֶרֶץ, v. 14. However, what happens with families who even at the end of a month still cannot travel to Jerusalem for some reason, e.g. because the Temple has been destroyed, or because it is simply not possible for them? Do they follow some other rite, since sacrificing the lamb is definitely impossible for them?<sup>1</sup> The Jewish community of Elephantine do not appear to celebrate Passover with a Passover sacrifice despite having their own Temple. But this exception cannot be converted into a generalized model. The way in which Philo speaks of the celebration of Passover appears to indicate that what was done in his days was considered sacrificial, priestly. For this reason, Philo underlines continually the

1. One might rightly think that the psalmic prayer (independently of the Sanctuary building with its priests and Levites) has substituted the piety of those who could not have access (for different reasons, for example, the centralizing deuteronomic movement) to the Jerusalem Temple. It does not make any sense to suppose that in any way, at any time, the intention was to deprive the poor or sick people of any kind of personal and religious experiences, being far away from Jerusalem (cf. N. M. SARNA, *The Psalms Superscriptions and the Guilds*, in S. STEIN – R. LOEWE [eds.], *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexandre Altmann*, p. 295, [quoted by B. M. BOKSER, *The Origins of the Seder. The Passover Rite and Early Rabbinic Judaism*. Berkely – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press [1984] 1986 p. 6).

sacrificial aspect of Passover. He does so in *Questions and Answers on Exodus* I,10, and also in *Special Laws* II, 27: «In this festival many myriads of victims from noon until eventide are offered by the whole people, old and young alike, raised for that particular day to the dignity of the priesthood. For at other times the priests according to the ordinance of the law carry out both the public sacrifices and those offered by private individuals. But on this occasion the whole nation performs the sacred rites and acts as priest with pure hands and complete immunity».

But then Philo reminds us that from a historical perspective the first Passover sacrifice was carried out in Egypt by impatient and highly virtuous people, who did not wait for a priest in order to carry out the sacrifice. He adds:

This practice which on that occasion was the result of a spontaneous and instinctive emotion, was sanctioned by the law once in every year to remind them of their duty of thanksgiving. These are the facts as discovered by the study of ancient history [...]. On this day every dwelling house is invested *with the outward semblance and dignity of a temple*. The victim is then slaughtered and *dressed for the festal meal which befits the occasion*. The guests assembled for the banquet have been cleansed by purificatory lustrations, and are there not as in other festive gatherings, to indulge the belly with wine and viands, but to fulfil with prayers and hymns the customs handed down by their fathers.

We note also that Philo, in addition to indicating the allegorical significance that he always sees in the sacred text, sets out to clearly differentiate (both here and in other places) between the Passover banquet and the Hellenistic banquets that surround it.

In summary we might say that we know very little with certainty of the Passover celebration during the Diaspora. We do not really know what this meal was like.<sup>2</sup> But it is very difficult to imagine the celebration without a meal. Not just because it is a condition of the Torah but also because, as B. M. Bokser reminds us: «the significance of the sacrificial rite transcends the details of the preparation of the animal and the killing. The feast had a wide historical and national significance, such as in memory of the salvific act of

2. Ch. Raphael is more optimistic, commenting that even before the destruction of the Temple the family festal meal included the blessings of bread, wine and bitter herbs, as in Ps 113-118. The exodus narrative was (even to a certain point the working up of the exodus rabbinic narrative). The frailty of this option lies in his relying solely on the synoptics and not on other arguments. Cf. Ch. RAPHAEL, *A Feast of History: The Drama of Passover Through the Ages*. London – Jerusalem 1972, 72.

God in Egypt and in celebration of His superiority over the Egyptian Gods (Ex 12,12 i 27; Dt 16,1)».<sup>3</sup> Also, in the history of religion, community meals (in our case, those of family[ies]) signified the celebration and unity of the various members of the believing family. Another observation that I believe to be pertinent is that the book of *Jubilees* (II-III BC) talks of the celebration-supper carried out with wine (this is the oldest mention that we have of wine in relation to the Passover feast). Jub 49 does not set out to explain only the biblical celebration but also its timing and atmosphere. Even though we might be able to describe this atmosphere in some way as «sectarian», it is helpful to remind ourselves of it: «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, and was ready to go forth from under the yoke of Egypt [...]. And the man who [...] does not come to observe it [...] and to eat and to drink before the Lord on the day of its festival [...] to observe it [...] and to eat and to drink before the Lord on the day of his feast...» (v. 5. 6. 9).<sup>4</sup>

## 2. PASCHAL CELEBRATION AT THE END OF THE FIRST CENTURY

The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD was a great trauma on all levels, political, social, and above all religious. The possibility of gaining God's pardon through individual, family, or community sacrifice had been lost. At a distance from the presence of God, how could those feasts—inexorably linked to the Temple—be celebrated? How could the Passover feast be celebrated when one of its essential elements, if not the most important, was the sacrifice carried out inside the Temple? The rabbinic work on the sacrifices, the prayers, the festive ceremonies carried out in the Temple, of necessity began soon afterwards. The decisions regarding the calendar in association with the feasts made this an urgent necessity. The general pattern was to transfer to the synagogue everything that used to be carried out in the Temple (in the same chronological order).<sup>5</sup> Individual or family sacrifices are replaced by prayers of supplication, and petitions for forgiveness and thanks-

3. *The Origins*, 54

4. We should not forget that the author of *Jubilees* insists that the Passover was only celebrated in Jerusalem, cf. *ibid.* v. 21: «before the tabernacle of the Lord, before his house in which resides His name».

5. Here the chronology of the official synagogue prayers that had been established long before the destruction of the Temple has to be taken into account. They substituted the timing of

giving in the synagogue... but what could be done with the solemn acts of blood sacrifice carried out historically in the Temple? The day of *Yom Kippur* perhaps was easier to resolve than that of the Passover sacrifice because the latter had, as an essential element, the consumption as a family of the offerings (unlike *Yom Kippur*). It was not at all easy to substitute this for some memorial (the carcass, a bone) in the meals. Most likely this praxis did not establish itself all of a sudden. We have some proof in the passages found in ancient literature that refer to the custom of eating roast meat and the custom ordered in Rome by Todos (Theodor?) of eating helmeted kids at the table (that is to say, with the feet and head stuffed inside). This is passed onto us by the Mishna (Pes 4,4). In another place, we are informed that the Patriarch, R. Gamaliel was eager to accept this type of sacrifice, but was not able to successfully introduce it. The same Gamaliel says later to his servant Tobi: «roast for us the *Pesah* on the grill» (Pes 7,2). It cannot have been easy to reach agreement amongst the Sages. An account exists of a night-long meeting in Lod that just discussed the Paschal laws, Tos Pes 10,12:

Rabban Gamaliel and his Elders sat down together for the *Seder* in the house of Boetus ben Zonin in Lida, and they discussed the laws of the Passover all through the night until the cock crowed, when the servants arrived put away the dishes and they all retired from the table and went to the *bet midrash*. Rabban Gamaliel, the Patriarch, was in favour of the practice of the roast helmeted kid, but the custom was stopped:<sup>6</sup> «[Gamaliel] gave three options [...] [including the] permission to prepare helmeted kids for the Passover. But the Elders<sup>7</sup> prohibited it (Bes 2,7)

Based on all this, and on a few additional sources, some have believed that sacrifices were offered after the Temple, especially at the Passover. But this has to be denied. Even so, according to the neutral testimony of some Christian writers in the Diaspora, the custom of eating some sort of roast lamb persisted in order to observe the *Seder*, in some way similar to the helmeted kids.<sup>8</sup> We could even go further: following the edition of the Mishna, a

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the official sacrifices of the Temple: early morning (*saharit*), midday (*minhah*), early evening (*arbit*).

6. Cf. Bes 2,7; Tos ibid. 2,15 (Zuk. 204): «What is a helmeted kid? A kid roast whole with the feet and head stuffed inside». For this type of kid cf. Ex 12,9: וְעַל-קַרְבּוֹ וְעַל-רֵעֵיוֹ רֹאשׁוֹ עַל-פְּרָעִי וְעַל-קַרְבּוֹ. The interpretation of the head of the community in Rome, Todos, is not, therefore, absurd.
7. I.e., at least the majority of them.
8. Cf. G. ALON, <sup>6</sup>1977 הקיבוץ המאוחד והתלמוד. ישראל: תולדות היהודים בארץ ישראל בתקופת המשנה והתלמוד, vol. 1, p. 164-165. On p. 165, he gives some quotations, especially that from Tos Ahil 3,9: «In Bet Dag-

roasted meat continued to be eaten in Israel for the Passover. One might even say that in the time of the Tannaim this was the prevalent custom in Israel. On this, E. D. Goldschmidt says:<sup>9</sup> «eating a roasted (meat) on the night of the Passover became a custom in Israel and in neighbouring lands, and with this custom originated the formulation of the question (of the *Seder*) that speaks of the roasted (meat) and that was soon cancelled in the other countries».

These ambiguities in the orthopraxis (remember that praxis in traditional Judaism is a decisive factor, unlike the contents of faith, doctrine or «dogma»), explain the double current of panic within the Jewish hierarchy (Patriarchy, Great Sanhedrin, and Rabbinat): on one hand, the panic and aversion of doing anything totally prohibited by the Torah (sacrifice outside the Temple), on the other, the fear of losing the much loved memory of the Temple and all its benefits. Thus the road to follow regarding the Paschal sacrifice is indicated clearly in the Mishna: remember the Temple (but with the victim reduced to a carcass or bone, nothing to do with a Paschal sacrifice in real terms). At the same time they did not wish to break the sentimental ties with the Temple: «in the places where it is custom to eat roast meat on the Paschal vigil, this can be done, but where it is not the custom it should not be eaten» (Pes 4,4; and cf. Bes 2,7).

### 3. THE PASSOVER RITE AT TABLE IN Pes 10 AND PARALLEL TEXTS

Although some times we have to introduce nuances (especially about the the four cups), the summary provided by S. Safrai and M. Stern is, I believe, a good way to introduce our point: «the texts that describe the *Seder* from the end of the first century and later (Pes 10) all suggest that the essential element of the supper was the «sanctification» (*qidduš*) of the day, the drinking

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gan in Juda a man died on the eve of Passover and they went to bury him. And the men entered and tied the rope on the rolling stone. The men drew (on the rope) from the outside, and the women entered and buried him. And the men went and (in a state of cleanness) they made the Paschal sacrifice in the evening». Worth noting also is the Cairo Geniza fragment that recounts a special benediction: that you have ordered to eat meat roasted on the fire...». There are those, too, who interpret Pes 10,4 along these lines (despite the particular opinion of Rashi): «... but on this night (we can eat) only roast meat». The text indicates not only the days of the Temple but also the days of the Mishna. We have to remember also the account of the *Mekilta* in Ex 18, 27—which is taken as indicating actions after the year 70: a penitent at the side of the Temple offers a sacrifice which is accepted by God.

9. *The Passover Haggadah* (Hebrew). Jerusalem: Bialik Institute <sup>3</sup>1977, 12.

of the four cups of wine, the recitation of the Hallel (Ps 115-118), the ingestion of the bitter herbs and the *ḥaroseṭ*, a mixture of apples, nuts and wine. It seems that this was done everywhere, not only in Jerusalem. But it seems that the account of the exodus (the *haggadah*) only became customary after 70 AD». <sup>10</sup>

On the other hand it is quite obvious (although it is often forgotten in the literature on the *Seder*) that the majority of the elements of the *Seder* have nothing to do originally with the Passover, they have been taken from the common banquets of Judaism or from the Greco-Hellenistic culture.

Let us make a short summary, which will by no means be exhaustive:

– *Physical material of the Seder common also in Greco-Roman culture:*

- general hors d'oeuvres, the fact of the liturgy, the *ḥaroseṭ*.<sup>11</sup> The bread and lettuce sandwich was also a Greco-Roman<sup>12</sup> custom. The same word that Pes 10 gives for «hors d'oeuvres», *parperet*, comes from the Greek (*periforá*); *epikômion* is a Greek term (from *epikômázô*) transcribed in the *Seder* as *'afiqoman*. (The origin of the wording looks clear enough).
- the mixture of wine with water (*mazag* in the *Seder*) had been a universal custom since very early in Hellenistic-Roman culture.

– *Common attitudes in Greco-Roman culture:*

- to have servants or, if not, having the sense of belonging to the social echelon of free people (according to the *Seder* the poor, too, had to participate in this sentiment on the Passover night).<sup>13</sup>
- to eat lying down on cushions or mats or on what the *Seder* defines as *msubbim*. In fact, lying down supported by the left elbow (*didónai*

10. S. SAFRAI – M. STERN (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. 2, Van Gorcum – Assen – Amsterdam: Van Gorcum 1976, 809.

11. Cf. S. STEIN, «The Influence of Symposia Literature on the Literary Form of the Pesah Haggadah», *JJS* 8 (1957) 114.

12. Cf. *ibid.* 17.

13. The special Code of the *Saturnalia* that attempts to put everyone on the same level, slaves and freemen, rich and poor, is interesting here.

*údor katá kheirón*) was synonymous with participating in a banquet in Greco-Hellenistic culture.<sup>14</sup>

- to wash hands (or a hand). At least washing at the start of the rite was normal practice, too, in Greco-Roman culture. This custom is detailed by Tos Ber 4,8ss (and parallel texts). The text gives the customs and the *halakot* of the solemn community meals/suppers of the Jewish culture.<sup>15</sup>

– *Common attitudes of the Seder and Jewish festive or solemn suppers:*

- the diverse blessings over the cups, over the bread, or over different meals in general. Cf. for example, the above mentioned Tos Ber 4,8s (and parallel texts).
- the washing of hands.
- the pre-meal hors d'oeuvres themselves.
- the dipping of the starters and food.
- eating while reclined supported on cushions or mats, that is to say, what the *Seder* calls *mshubim*.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. THE CONTEXT OF Pes 10

The editor of the Mishna was R. Yehuda ha-Nasi, or simply the *Rabbi*. He was such a great lover of culture that he disparaged the uncultivated Jews, the *'am ha-'areš*, and he often refused to help them financially: «disgraces only come into the world, he said, because of the ignorant» (BB 8a). His fre-

14. This manner of being at table already occurs in the Bible, though always in a royal context or degenerate aristocracy. Cf. Am 2,8; 6,4; Est 1,6; 7,8; Ct 1,12.

15. For details, see S. LIEBERMAN, *Tosefta ki-Fshutah... Zeraim*, vol. 1. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1995 i. l. They used to hold the glass and the food only with one hand, and likewise with the eating of the *parperet* (the starters, that accompanied the more serious dishes).

16. Ber 6,6, among other Rabbinic texts (like Tos Ber 4,8s, and Pes 108a), speaks of eating reclined during normal meals: «If they are seated to eat, each one recites the blessing by himself; if they are reclined around (the table) one says it (the blessing) for everyone». That is to say, although there may be several at the table this is not a community affair, they do not form part of it; the word «recline» then only indicates a formal meal, but not necessarily Passover; the word appears in the four questions of the *Seder*. Cf. D. C. KRAEMER, *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages*. New York: Routledge (2007) 2009, 80.



quent and good contacts with the Roman Empire<sup>17</sup> make it logical to insist on an understanding of the Greek language and culture. He wished to use everything to strengthen the Jewish implantation in Israel and this is why he asked his citizens that they abandon Aramaic and prefer Hebrew or Greek: «why should they use the Syriac language (Aramaic) in Israel? Speak Hebrew or Greek».<sup>18</sup> It would appear that this request addressed to his citizens is more or less related to another that is also attributed to him by *Mekilta de R. Yišma' el* 13,13 (Piša 18). The midrash explains the obligation to redeem the first-born son. It adds: «It is here that they say (the Sages): by the law of the Torah man is obliged to circumcise his son, to redeem him, to teach him the Torah, a craft, to find him a wife. R. Aquiba says: also to swim. Rabbi says: also education of the country, *yiššub mđinah*».<sup>19</sup> As Stein says, the Patriarch (or Rabbi) was very up to date in regard to Greek-Hellenistic culture. He was surrounded by a Hellenistic environment. It is said about one of his predecessors in the Patriarchate: «he gave him permission to teach Greek to his students because he had a good relationship with the (Roman) Government [...] there were a thousand young men in his father's house or Academy, five hundred of whom studied the Law, while the other five hundred studied Greek Wisdom».<sup>20</sup> This is an interesting point which has been handed down by Jewish tradition.

17. The relationship and dialogues with Antoninus (Pius?), with Marcus Aurelius (?) are described by different *aggadot* which explain them in a more or less legendary exuberant style. GnR 75,5; 78,15 speak as well of his contacts with Rome.

18. BQ 82b-83a.

19. Midrash *Zait Ra 'anan* understands this simply as «good manners», *derek'eres* (quoted in the edition of the *Mekilta* of H. S. HOROVITZ – I. A. RABIN, Jerusalem 1970).

20. Sot 49b. Cf. S. LIEBERMAN, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1942, 1. 20. It seems that there was a «Greek wisdom» Academy in Palestine in the second century AD. There some rabbis who were well trained in writing and speaking literary Greek, which does not mean they knew classical Greek. Most probably their interest mainly relied on rhetorical and juridical matters. One has to mention in this respect Elisha ben Abuya (IIc, cf. Hag 15b) and Abbahu (IIIc-IVc.) from the school of Caesarea. Abbahu thought that it was a good thing for his daughters to learn Greek. His way of reasoning is of interest: it is a kind of adornment for his daughters, Pea 1,1,15c. The Mishna forbids the teaching of Greek to children (Sot 9,14). The ban is usually placed around the time of the war in 70 (or the Trajan war). The Mishna text does not represent a serious difficulty. Clearly, the more conservative or less cultured rabbis were totally against Greek culture (cf. M. AVI-YONAH, *The Jews of Palestine. A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1976, 72). Archaeological findings have shown that Greek proper names are found even in the tomb inscriptions of the more simple people in Jaffa, *ibid.* 73-74. According to Avi-Yonah, intellectuals born in Palestine (especially in the IVc) and living in the cities were well acquainted with legal Greek jargon and with mythological stories. Lower class Jews in the cities spoke fluently the Greek of their pagan neighbours. Their high

Since we want to discover the possibilities of the Hellenistic cultural influences in the *Seder* (whenever they occurred), we should take into account that the editor of Pes 10 (and parallel texts) was working at the end of the second century strongly and was influenced by Greek literature in general. He undoubtedly was acquainted with the symposia. In fact, the important Jews —especially the rabbinic cultured people— knew and put into practice the sympotic meals.<sup>21</sup>

From the nucleus of Pes 10 there would gradually emerge what we know as the *Seder* up to the present.

## 5. THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

### 5.1. *The symposium*

*The Oxford Classical Dictionary* provides the following definition of a symposium:

A Symposium was a Greek drinking-party that followed the evening meal. After libations had been poured and a hymn sung there was drinking according to an agreed procedure; the wine was diluted with water in various proportions. The participants were garlanded and many used perfume... In addition to conversation the guests told riddles and fables and sung capped drinking songs, and pieces of verse from traditional classics or recent drama. Games were played, particularly *kóttabos*. There was usually a woman pipe-player...

The literature of the symposia has abundantly handed down in Greek and Latin and the texts are of an very early date, as can be seen in the *Illiad* in its

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level of fluency in Greek or their interest in Greek culture is clearly seen in the written correspondence between Libanius (a great teacher of rhetoric) and the Patriach Gamaliel V in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. The way it is worded implies knowledge of the main elements of Greek mythology, cf. G. STEMBERGER, *Jews and Christians in Holy Land. Palestine in the Fourth Century*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 2000, 4. 258ss.

21. Ch. Raphael rightly says: «An obvious example is the costume worn by the extremely orthodox —a fur cap, long silk coat, brightly coloured stockings— familiar today in Jerusalem's Meah Shearim and other places, but starting as the dress of a nobleman in 16th-century Poland. Something similar happened with the Haggadah in Palestine of the early part of the second century CE. Jewish leaders of the time were quite naturally responsive to the intellectual climate in which they lived, and engaged in symposia like their contemporaries. The social customs of Greek symposia are described in books which show very interesting parallels to the Haggadah style», RAPHAEL, *A Feast of History*, 86-87.

first book (c. VIII BC). Although the word appears for the first time in the works of Alceus (c. VII-VI BC) the practice of the symposia was common on the islands of Asia Minor at the beginning of the VI c. B.C.<sup>22</sup> The order which was followed after the supper and the cleansing of the tables consisted of a ritual introduction with libations to the gods,<sup>23</sup> and the choral singing of hymns accompanied by double-flutes (this was the sacrificial part of the symposium). The symposium as such was followed by the exit to the street of the participants, in a group, the *kômos*, (an important element for understanding the origin of the *'afiqoman* of the *Seder*). Once in the street, krater (a bowl for mixing the wine with water) in hand, the uproar continued. Following the liturgical-sacrificial part, the hors d'oeuvres were usually served, normally cheeses and various types of bread or cakes to stimulate thirst. At first the symposium was undoubtedly hierarchical: «soldiers brought the food to the nobles or heroes of celebrated battles. Then, poetry presided over the scene».<sup>24</sup> The poetry, the game, the festival, the education of the young etc. were the centre of attention of the participants. Later, poetry was replaced by philosophical or ethical themes (as can be seen in the symposium of Plato).

The krater was without doubt the most important object of the symposium, at least during the Hellenistic period. This way they felt distinct from the barbarians. From this came the diluted wine.<sup>25</sup> Although sometimes the wine played a bad role: the participants went from «tranquillity» (*'êsukhía*)—an ideal state sought in the symposium— into a state of frivolity or, worse still, they arrived at a state of debauchery and even murder..

22. This is affirmed by M. VETTA (from whom we have taken a large amount of the material on symposia) in *The Culture of the Symposium*, in J.-L. FLANDRIN – M. MONTANARI (eds.), *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press 1999, 97. The end of his article offers two pages of selected bibliography on Symposia.

23. Usually three libations were made from the krater; with wine taken from the first one, libations were made to honour Zeus and his Olympian family; the second one was to honour the spirits of the heroes and the third krater was drunk to honour Zeus Soter. Cf. M. VETTA, *The Culture of the Symposium*, 101.

24. Often a type of poetry competition took place, passing from one participant to the next as a myrtle branch was passed around.

25. In diverse proportions following the criterion of the president or a member of the symposium.

5.2. *Opinions against the influence of the symposium on the Seder*

Among the authors who have written against the influence of the sympotic literature, the following stand out: E. D. Goldschmidt,<sup>26</sup> B. M. Bokser,<sup>27</sup> and Cl. Leonhard.<sup>28</sup> Goldschmidt reacts to the writings of Stein (a supporter of the theory of significant influence), praising his work: he has discovered, he says, interesting parallels in the *Seder* with sympotic literature. But Goldschmidt does not follow his appreciation of this literature as a model for the *Seder*.<sup>29</sup> Bokser is the main opponent of Stein's thesis. We shall look at some of his arguments. But now I want to emphasise what I think is his general conclusion, which I shall split into two parts: first, in a clear way and with good arguments he concludes that the stimulus or effort («*impetus*» in Stein) for the development of the Paschal rite (whenever it happens) does not come from sympotic literature. It does not need to. Bringing up to date the statements written in the Torah and especially compelled by the absence of the Temple (the Paschal offerings) or by its inattainability, building up the corresponding transpositions (as we see the Therapeutae and the Qumran people somehow did)<sup>30</sup> they had enough to create what we now have in the *Seder*.<sup>31</sup> The necessity to re-establish the continuity with the past is what pushed them on.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, the parallels/models that Stein locates in the sympotic

26. *The Passover Haggadah*.

27. *The Origins*.

28. «Die älteste Haggada. Übersetzung der Pesach Haggada nach dem palästinischen Ritus und Vorschläge zu ihrem Ursprung und ihrer Bedeutung für die Geschichte der Christlichen Liturgie», in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 45 (2003) 201-231. According to Leonhard, the *Seder* is not that old. And about the haggadah itself, he says: «Although the oral tradition is of great value in the days of the Mishna and Talmud, the sources testify that —because they depend on the rules of this liturgy— only a small part of it has been standardized. The haggadah as something that has authority and as a material more or less known is not likely in the Mishna or Talmud days», 203.

29. *The Passover Haggadah*, p. 7.

30. On these groups see BOKSER, *The Origins*, 22-25. 55-61; also J. MAGNESS, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit. Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, Grand Rapids – Michigan – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2011, 79-84 .

31. I believe it is irrelevant for the purposes of our presentation to know when the word for the rite of the Passover meal came into being. We do not really know. Maybe the term *Seder* was not used before the Middle Ages, and some —such as Bokser and Kraemer— do not believe it to be the adequate word to represent what we have in the Mishna in any case.

32. Cf. *The Origins*, 53.

literature can and have been explained as often coming from the general and particular development of Jewish orthopraxis.<sup>33</sup>

### 5.3. *Opinions favouring the influence*

The scholar who has worked on this most effectively is S. Stein in a 1957 article.<sup>34</sup> The majority of scholars have essentially followed him,<sup>35</sup> amongst others, D. Kraemer<sup>36</sup> and S. Safrai.<sup>37</sup> First of all we should remember that Stein in his thesis is clear-sighted enough; in his opinion the option in favour of the influence of sympotic literature (and banqueting practice) does not preclude other co-influences such as the growth of liturgies after 70 A.D. and the usual midrashic development of the texts.<sup>38</sup> One of the benefits of the study of Stein lies in the analysis of the vocabulary of the *Seder*. It is clear however that these same words of Greek provenance that he mentions [Pes 10,3: *parperet* (*starter*) from *periforá*; *tragêma* (*nuts*); *'afiqoman* (*epikômion*); *daraš*, from its parallel in the genre, *zêtein*], could have come to the *Seder* indirectly through common Jewish meals or feasts in general. Linguistic equivalents are sometimes too quickly affirmed, such as for example: *eipé gâr 'Omêrus* which is equated to *še-ne'emar* or *ha-katub*; or to say that the president of the symposium does what we see in the *maggid haggadah*. Undoubtedly several of his parallels are very helpful, e.g. in the *Saturnalia* the food brought becomes the material of discussion, as in the *Seder*, only that in this case the *Seder* remains faithful to the theological interests of the Rabbis. The *Seder* therefore is influenced by the external mould of the literature of the symposium. Sometimes his parallels are more global in nature and debatable, such as when examining the text of the haggadah about Dt 26,5s.

33. However, in more than one place Bokser (*ibid*) seeks to clarify his position against the influence of Hellenistic literature. Thus he states on p. 55: what the «ancient Rabbinic Judaism did to organize the paschal ritual around a meal was just to carry out a singular adaptation of the hellenistic supper». And see p. 62.

34. «The Influence of Symposia Literature on the Literary Form of the Pesah Haggadah», *JJS* 8 (1957) 13-44.

35. At the beginning of his article STEIN mentions his predecessors in the task of valuing the symposia literature in the *Seder*, among them, S. Krauss and I. Lewy. For a critical vision of the article of Stein, see Ch. RAPHAEL, *A Feast of History*.

36. In C. HEZSER (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*. Oxford: University Press 2010, 414.

37. *The Jewish People*, 810.

38. Cf. «The Influence of Symposia», 15.18.19.22.33.

In his view, it follows the framework of the *genus laudativum* of the symposium, criticizing and praising scenes concerning the *Heilsgeschichte* in a type of proem that begins with *baruk šomer habṭaḥato* (*habṭaḥo*). It is what Quintilianus calls *responsa et auguria*.<sup>39</sup> What he says about the term *maṣṣah* used by R. Gamaliel II in the *Seder* is both interesting and questionable. Gamaliel gives a mental parallel with the Greek word *azúmous* (LXXEx 12,39ss), otherwise you can not understand the *Seder*: «the *maṣṣah* that we eat, what does this mean?...». It makes no sense to reply: «because our Fathers were redeemed from Egypt...», unless we suppose the popular etymology (by the glossographic method) by which *maṣṣah* is understood as coming from *moši'* (takes them out from Egypt). A little like Macrobius who in his *Saturnalia* designated the «nuts», *iuglans*, as coming from the word Jupiter.

Whatever the soundness of some of his conclusions, his main point remains firm; we shall see it after a short summary of the different answers coming from the scholarship opposed to Stein. As Bokser puts it: ?

### 5.3.1. Similarities between the Symposium and the *Seder* (Mishna and Tosefta) including linguistic similarities

1. The use of waiters to carry the food (Pes 10,1.2.3.4.5.7; Tos Pes 10,1.2.5.9b.12)
2. Reclining during the meal ( Pes 10,1; Tos Pes 10,1).
3. Dipping the food (Pes 10,3).
4. Hors d'oeuvres (Pes 10,3; Tos Pes 10,5, 9b. 9d-10).
5. Use of wine before, during, and following the food (Pes 10,1.2. 4.7; Tos Pes 10,1.2.4).
6. The festive nature (Tos Pes 10,4).
7. Pedagogical use of questions and intellectual discussion (Pes 10,4; Tos Pes 10,11-12).
8. Singing and praising God (Pes 10,5; 6,7 i Tos Pes 10,6-9a).
9. Games to keep children awake (Tos Pes. 10,9b).

A first general observation forces itself upon us: in the Symposia, the liturgy, the religious rite, is carried out in reverse order with respect to the *Seder*. In the *Seder*, the rite strictly speaking takes place before the actual

39. Cf. *The Origins*, 37-38.43.

supper (and, as far as we know, this was always the case),<sup>40</sup> whereas in the Symposium it was afterwards. Having said this, we agree that points 1 to 6, all of them, also exist in the Jewish communal suppers (which were more or less festive). However, dipping and the use of wine follow a special rule on the Passover night: dipping occurs twice, and concerning the wine, it is forbidden to drink additional cups after the third one. This cannot be found in the Symposium; but if it is there in the *Seder* it must be out of a desire to oppose the Symposium.<sup>41</sup> The special use of the wine in the *Seder* must be another case of the obligatory transference in the time of Rabbinism because the joy of the festivities could not be seen in the ingestion of the meat of the victims. It was easy to transfer it to the drink. This is how Pes 109a sees it: «when the Temple was there, the “joy” (required in a festive occasion) was in the meat, but now that there is no Temple, there is only the joy of the wine». Three of the four cups were not specific for the *Seder*. (Wine was consumed with the hors d’oeuvres of customary suppers, during the meal, and after the Jewish meal). The first cup of the *Seder* is the *qidduš* (Pes 10,2) quite normal in suppers and present in the celebration of Sabbath days and feasts; the third cup is found before the giving of thanks (Pes 10,7) and we find this equally after normal meals. The second cup is the one that precedes the questions of the infant and accompanies the discussion (Pes 10,4). The fourth cup seems to have been added afterwards in the *Seder*. Stein explains this as another influence on the *Seder* coming from the songs and praises that occur after the banquet in the Symposium. Bokser prefers to see it as a necessary substitution of support: in the Temple the singing of Psalms accompanied the killing of the sacrificial victims and in the *Seder* they found necessary the fourth cup to accompany the Hallel, and so it was added. I do not find this a very convincing argument.

I believe that the pedagogical use of questions (7) certainly merits the attention that Bokser gives to it: the theme begins in the Torah itself, Ex 12, 26-27: «and when your children say to you, “What do you mean by this service?”, you shall say, “It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover...”»; Ex 13,8: «You shall tell your son on that day, “It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt”». In line with this instruction for those who

40. See, however, *The Passover Haggadah*, 10, n. 1.

41. Rabbinic circles are accustomed to drinking wine during festive meals. This is attested by, among other texts, Tos Ber 4,8. The discussion between R. Hillel and R. Shammai concerning the sequence of the blessings over the bread and wine proves that wine was used liturgically already in the first century. Cf. *The Origins*, 130, n. 51.

do not know, the children, and in order to help them pay attention, the *Seder* speaks of a game for them with a piece of *maṣṣah* (Tos Pes 10,9).

Finally Pes 10,8 shows how the *Seder* should not come to an end: «the Paschal meal does not end with the *ʿafiqomon* (*epikômion*)». <sup>42</sup> This was what happened generally after the Symposium. The Symposia ended very often with some sort of revelry in the streets. After the Symposium it was usual to go to other houses to continue celebrating. This is what the Mishna forbids. Even if the ban was intended to oppose the rivalry of the Symposium, as Bokser agrees, it implies a clear influence of the Symposium on the *Seder*.

## CONCLUSION

Bokser's options are, in fact, not so different from these of S. Stein. The only clear opposition to Stein lies in the stimulation or motivation («impetus») with regard to the *Seder*. Jewish tradition did not need the stimulation of the sympotic literature in order to develop the *Seder*, as Bokser repeats here and there. However, stating that in its development the *Seder* has been influenced many times by the Symposium is surely something else. Because if we say, as Bokser does, that here and there the text of the *Seder* continues to grow and does so in opposition to the customs and practices of the people of the Symposium, we confess the strength of this literary genre on the Jewish Passover. It does not really matter if it is in opposition or in imitation, conscious or unconscious.

We believe that the literary genre of the Symposium was not, properly speaking, a model for the Jewish *Seder*. Neither was it a model which the people of the *Seder* were continually seeking to challenge. Simply it was the air that men breathe. The use of the genre was unavoidable if they wanted to

42. *Epikômazo* means *to rush* with a party of revellers. Cf. S. LIEBERMAN, *Ha-Yerushalmi Kiphshuto*. Jerusalem 1934, 521; Íd., *Tosefta Kiphshutah*, New York 1955- (?), vol. 4k, 655 (quoted by BOKSER who mentions in n. 62, p. 132 several interpretations of the *ʿafiqomon* or *ʿafiqomon* in the literary Jewish tradition). The term is still translated as «dainties» in the English version of J. NEUSNER (New York: Ktav Publishing House 1981) in Tos Pes 10,11; in Carlos DEL VALLE's Spanish version in Pes 10,8, «se despiden con un postre» (dessert). H. Danby (*The Mishnah*, Oxford: University Press 1933) offers the correct old meaning of Pes 10,8: «after the Passover meal they should not disperse to join in rivalry», and see the note i.l. and the one of the *Mishnah* edited by 1968 ביאליק מוסד תל אביב, ירושלים, ששה סדרי משנה. ח. אלבק, 116



raise the issue of commensality as well as that of the oral and written truths passed on from generation to generation.

When all is said and done, the sympotic genre as such disappeared, while the *Seder* is still continuing, alive and giving life.