

# **This Is Why the White House Is Certain Syria Gassed Its Own People**

Tuesday, senior White House officials briefed members of the media with a detailed description of the evidence the Trump administration says proves beyond all shadow of doubt Bashar al-Assad ordered the chemical weapons attack on his own people.

What they shared they said carried a “high degree of certainty” within the administration. It also destroys the talking points of a number of the voices that have been critical of President Donald Trump’s decision to launch cruise missile strikes against the Syrian airbase from which the chemical attacks were launched.

The first official, who cannot be identified because the briefing was given on background, stated:

What we’ve done here is we’ve declassified a lot of intelligence with great thanks to our colleagues in the intelligence community so that we can be very forthcoming with you about the amount that we know about this attack and why we believe the Russian and Syrian narratives are false. And we think it’s really important for you to understand the depth of information that we have that supports this narrative.

I would say that since we started coming forward, in the immediate wake of the attack, all the way through to today, we continued to get additional information. And the information we get about this attack continues to be clear and consistent with our understanding of the attack, starting on the day of the attack, April 4th, and working all the way through today.

And I would say we, even as recently as last night, for today, declassified additional information that, again, lends additional weight and credibility to the narrative I want to share with you today.

The information we have downgraded and declassified includes a wide body of open-source material, both social media accounts. It includes open-source videos, reporting, open-source imagery, et cetera, as well as our own geospatial intelligence, our signals intelligence and it includes physiological samples of victims of the attack. And again, all of that tells a very clear and consistent story about what we think happened.

So to be clear, based on the pro-opposition social media reporting, those reports indicate that the chemical attack began in Khan Sheikhun at about 6:55 local time on April 4th. Our information makes quite clear that the attack came from SU-22 fixed-wing aircraft out of the Shayrat airfield, which is regime-controlled. These aircraft were in the vicinity of Khan Sheikhun for about 20 minutes before reports of the chemical attack came out, and they vacated the area shortly after the attack. And I think some of you have seen the information that we shared previously about the tracks of those aircraft that came out of the Khan Sheikhun airfield—or out of the Shayrat airfield, lingered over Khan Sheikhun, and came back to that airfield.

In addition, we have information that suggests that personnel historically associated with the chemical weapons program were at Shayrat airfield in late March preparing for this attack. On the dates surrounding the attack, and the day of the attack, they were again present at that airfield. Hours after the attack, there were hundreds of accounts of victims of the particular chemical weapons attack.

The victimology, the symptomology of those victims is very consistent with nerve agent and sarin exposure. And now, as

I will note, we do have physiological samples from a number of victims that confirm sarin exposure. The symptomology was quite consistent. We saw miosis, or pin-point pupils. We see frothing at the nose and mouth, twitching. All of those are consistent with nerve agent. They are not consistent with chlorine.

Also, the victimology shows that those people don't have other wounds or injuries that would be consistent with a conventional attack.

I would note, as well, that another clear symptom of sarin or nerve agent exposure is that the secondary responders also started to have symptoms consistent with sarin exposure. And those were the people that were there that took in the victims, that were touching them, that were removing their clothing. Some of those also passed out and had other symptoms of sarin exposure.

So by about 12:15 local time, the open source was very clear: It showed images of dead children of varying ages. And then we started to get accounts of the hospital, where some of those victims were being taken, being bombed at about 1:10 p.m. local. It showed, again, victims flooding to that particular hospital before there was a conventional attack against that hospital.

The impact craters that we have in imagery and open source show conventional weapons being used around that hospital, not chemical weapons there. The other information we have shows that leakage around the actual weapon that we think the sarin came from, not explosive debris that we would expect if it had been an explosive munition that it hit chemicals or something that would be consistent with a Russian attack. And again, we think that is not true ...

We also think—some people have alleged that videos had been fabricated, that a lot of this information had been

fabricated. The absolute massive data we have, and all the different vehicles we've gotten it from—open-source videos, to victim accounts, to imagery, to signals intelligence—it's just too massive for really any intelligence organization to fabricate in that short a period of time. We just think that's not a feasible explanation.

And then we did confirm that some of the videos that were shot of the account, we did go to independently confirm that the times at which those videos were taken were consistent with the times of the attack and not from prior footage of other attacks, other places.

So let me walk through a little bit—and, I would also note the World Health Organization came up with similar analysis on April 5th. It, too, felt that the victims had been exposed to nerve agent based on the same kind of symptomology along the board. And we do expect that as others continue—and we would expect we are looking forward to the OPCW's fact-finding mission, looking into this event itself, and we think it's really important for them to get out there, for them to have access to the site of the attack, to the airfield, to other places that might be affiliated. And we expect that any samples they find will again be consistent with what we've found so far.

In terms of the Russian narrative—and I'll get back to your question about them and the inconsistency—across the board, starting in 2013 and then since, we've seen both the Russians and the Syrians have a very clear campaign to try to obfuscate the nature of attacks, the attackers and what has happened in any particular incident.

They've thrown out a bunch of potential agents, a bunch of potential responsible or accountable parties. And, often, their own information is inconsistent with their own narrative.

They certainly have dismissed the allegations of a chemical weapons attacking Khan Sheikun. They called it a “prank of a provocative nature.” But again, we don’t think it’s remotely possible for the Syrians or the Russians to have fabricated this much information so fast and so consistently on this attack.

I’d also note that we’ve, of course, got extensive media observers and we have our own intelligence information. And the intelligence information and the accounts we’ve gotten from our partners, again, suggest very similar outcomes in this attack.

They noted, as I said—the Russians did—that this was a regime attack against a munitions depot, and that perhaps that terrorists had been holding chemical munitions that were attacked and then exploded from there. As I noted, we think that the information is inconsistent with that narrative. There is, as I said, leakage, and not in this hospital or this area where they said a building was attacked, but in a separate place where we can see the leakage from that munition. It is inconsistent with where the Russians would say that this attack happens and where the gas came from. And similarly, again, it’s leakage; it does not show explosive dissemination of the chemicals. And we don’t see a building, again, with that chemical residue we would expect if the Russian narrative was true.

The official declined to comment on previous news reports that suggested Russia was aware of the chemical attack beforehand but did say the media would be updated once the intelligence assessments on that aspect of the situation were completed. He did say, however, that it seemed clear the Russian government was attempting to cover up what happened:

We’re still looking into that, into the particulars of that question. And there’s not a consensus on our side about the extent or how to interpret the information that we have and

continue to get.

However, what we do know from looking at a history of the Russian military and the Syrian military operating together for the better part of two years now closely, since the Russian advisory mission and assistance mission began in earnest in 2015. And in addition, two militaries that have a decades-long support relationship. Based on that historical pattern, we've seen that these two militaries operate very closely, even down to an operational and tactical level.

And so considering the fact that there were Russian forces co-located with Syrian forces at the Shayrat airfield, in addition to many other installations—many other Syrian regime installations around the country—we do think that it is a question worth asking the Russians about how is it possible that their forces were co-located with the Syrian forces that planned, prepared and carried out this chemical weapons attack at the same installation, and did not have foreknowledge.

After some back-and-forth with reporters over the cover-up allegations, the official returned to his explanation of the Trump administration's reasons for why the Russian-Syrian narrative is false:

Moscow, as I noted, said that the release of chemicals was caused by the terrorist—a strike on a terrorist ammunition depot, but a Syrian military source told Russian state media on April 4th that regime forces had not carried out any strike in Khan Sheikhun, which contradicted Russia's claim directly.

An open-source video shows where we believe the chemical munition landed—again, not on a facility with weapons, but in the middle of a street in the northern section of Khan Sheikhun. The imagery of that site from April 6th, after the allegation, shows a crater in the road that corresponds to

the open-source video, so we can track to where we think that particular munition was.

The Russians also allege that the terrorists—this was a bombing on a terrorist ammunition depot. We do not assess and have not assessed that ISIS or other terrorists in the area have sarin. So while ISIS is using sulfur mustard and we've documented that quite well, and certainly oppose chemical weapons use by any actor, state or non-state, and are working, of course, to be able to push back ISIS chemical use as well— it is quite clear to us that in this case this is not a terrorist holding of sarin or terrorist use of sarin. But we do know that the Syrian regime has sarin, that it used it in the 2013 attack, and there are outstanding questions from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that make quite clear that Syria has not fully come clean on the locations, facilities, types of agents or personnel involved with its chemical weapons program, causing us additional questions on what's there.

I think it's a clear pattern of deflecting blame. We've seen this in multiple accounts, including when the OPCW-U.N. joint investigative mechanism came out with reports in August and October of last year identifying Syria as culpable in three chemical weapons attacks. In these three cases these were chlorine attacks. They were from a different airfield here. The United States did come out with designations on personnel affiliated with that attack on that airfield to condemn that use, as well.

This is quite concerning, given that the Russians were part of setting up the deal by which Syria was supposed to give up its chemical weapons. It was party to the deal to create the Joint Investigative Mechanism to investigate these attacks. The JIM did come forward with clear attribution calls, and Russia has refused to accept those along the way.

Another senior administration official described what the administration believes was the Syrian reason for the chemical weapons attack as well:

In the middle of March, opposition forces launched an offensive from Southern Idlib province toward the major city of Hama, which is a strategic city in Syria. It's Syria's third city, and it's also the location of a key Syrian regime airbase that has been crucial for the regime and the forces that support it for projecting power from central Syria, both along the western spine, from Aleppo down to the south, and also further to the east to support operations in Palmyra. So that is an airbase that the regime had to calculate that it could not lose.

The opposition offensive approach was able to penetrate to within just a couple of miles of that strategic airbase and also threatened the Hama population center within just a few miles.

At that point, the regime we think calculated that with its manpower spread quite thin, trying to support both defensive operations and consolidation operations in Aleppo and along that north-south spine of western Syria, and also trying to support operations which required it to send manpower and resources east toward Palmyra, we believe that the regime probably calculated at that point that chemical weapons were necessary in order to try to make up for the manpower deficiency.

That's why we saw, we believe, multiple attacks of this nature against locations that the regime probably determined were support areas for the opposition forces that were near Hama—for example, in the town of Al-Tamanah and then in the town of Khan Sheikhun, both of which are in what would be, in military terms, the rear area for the opposition forces that were on the front line.

So we believe certainly that there was an operational calculus that the regime and perhaps its Russian advisors went through in terms of the decision-making.

A third administration official discussed the international impact of these findings, particularly as it applies to the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:

It's incredibly important that we speak with one voice at the United Nations and at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We need to speak with a clear message: That chemical weapons use of any kind, by any actor, is absolutely intolerable. That is our goal, and we need to do everything we can, collectively, to make sure that comes across clearly.

We're working with all of our partners, and we've made this message clear to the Russians as well, and will continue to do so, that we believe it's in no state's interest that any actor uses chemical weapons. {eoa}

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## **Prophecy: Payback—the Angels Are Troubling the Water**

Payback. The message is going viral because it's a word of the Lord that is inspiring hope for those who have seen injustice.

For the month of April, the Lord told me the devil has stirred trouble in the lives of some, but that He is sending angels to trouble the water. He said healing and deliverance is coming to who so ever will press into Jesus. In other words, it's time for payback.

I believe this is part of the angels of abundant harvest prophecy that the Lord gave me for 2017. It's time to press into the fulness of that prophecy, which you can read at .

In the meantime, let this video inspire your faith. I've had testimonies of people in my church who had money stolen from a fund that they never thought they'd see again. It was returned this week. I've read headlines about former Wells Fargo executives this week who are being mandated to pay back \$75 million. This is just the beginning.

It's time for payback!

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## **How This Powerful Evangelist Uses Everyday Experiences as Gospel-Driven Opportunities**

Todd White see his mission as equipping the body of Christ in the power of evangelism. But he doesn't teach Christians to target nonbelievers, he says, "I don't go out there looking for somebody. Instead, I teach people who they are so they can function everywhere they go."

Watch the video to learn from Todd's powerful testimony.

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# Explosion on US Army Base Kills 1, Injures 3

One person was killed and three were injured and taken to a local hospital on Tuesday following an explosion at a U.S. Army ammunition plant in Independence, Missouri, a spokeswoman for the Joint Munitions Command said.

The Army said no further information was immediately available at a building at the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant, which has a government staff of 29 civilians and one soldier.

According to the Joint Munitions Command, the facility, which opened in 1940, makes small-caliber munitions and operates as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization test center.

Independence, Missouri, is about 10 miles east of Kansas City.  
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## The States Have the Means to Rein in the Federal Government

Georgia state Rep. Paulette Rakestraw helped lead her state to be the first to join a formal interstate compact to push the federal government to balance the budget, since she doesn't believe the federal government will fix its own fiscal mess.

"The problem in Washington is the structure; you can replace

everyone there and it's not going to change," Rakestraw, a Republican and immediate past chairwoman of the Compact for a Balanced Budget Commission, told The Daily Signal. "We are the peacekeepers of the world. If the dollar crashes, if America isn't solvent as a nation, it becomes a major security risk."

Out west, the push by states to force the federal government to be fiscally responsible had mixed results this year.

Last week, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, signed legislation to join the balanced budget compact, asserting in a statement, "With nearly \$20 trillion in debt, a burden which will be paid for by our kids and grandkids, it's time states took action to say, 'enough is enough.'"

But, New Mexico's Democratic House speaker, Brian Egolf, successfully led the effort this year to rescind the state's resolution for a convention to pass a balanced budget amendment, which dates back to 1976. Egolf said, "With the current climate of the country, I have a hard time believing this would ever be a good idea."

"Some people fear a runaway convention, when nothing could be further from the truth," New Mexico state Rep. Yvette Herrell, a Republican who is a co-founder of the Balanced Budget Amendment Task Force, told The Daily Signal. "This thwarted an opportunity to help out the country back on solid financial footing. It's the smart thing to do. States cannot spend outside our means. The federal government shouldn't be allowed to."

The comings and goings of states is no small matter, as even proponents of seeking a balanced budget amendment through an Article V convention don't all agree with how many are on board.

Article V of the U.S. Constitution allows for a constitutional convention to be convened if two-thirds—or 34—of the states call for one. If a convention approves an amendment, three-

fourths of the states—or 38—must vote to ratify it into the Constitution.

How far along the states are is the big question. Here's why:

- Ducey signed a bill committing Arizona to join the “Compact for America” proposal with Alaska, Georgia, Mississippi and North Dakota. So, since 2014, one-tenth of states have now signed on to a very specific proposal that also limits borrowing and empowers states. The compact needs another 33 states to reach the magic number of 38 for likely ratification, or another 29 just to get a convention.
- A separate organization that began in 2011, called the Balanced Budget Amendment Task Force, points to 29 states that now support a convention, so it would take just a handful more to call a convention. The count is based on the number of state legislatures that have voted for an application for a convention as far back as 1957.

The Heritage Foundation's “Blueprint for a Balanced Federal Budget 2017” calls for “moving towards a balanced budget amendment to constrain future attempts at circumventing budget caps.”

In the short term, a statutory spending cap is required, said Justin Bogie, senior policy analyst for fiscal affairs at The Heritage Foundation.

“A balanced budget amendment would take so long to get through with buy-in from other states, it's more long-term,” Bogie told The Daily Signal. “We want to do something in the meantime to try to get spending under control.”

Bogie said any amendment would need to have spending cuts and caps.

“We wouldn't want an amendment to give room to raise taxes to

cover increased spending,” he said.

The Compact for America contends those 29 state proposals are not identical and would mean an undefined convention as opposed to the compact, which would streamline the process because states have already agreed to give an up-or-down vote to one specific amendment.

“Our position is that words matter, and if you take these various applications, one says X and another says Y, but they all just include a [balanced budget amendment], it’s hard to disregard what the states wanted,” Nick Dranias, president of the Compact for America Education Foundation, told The Daily Signal.

The compact proposal states that the constitutional debt limit would cap federal debt at 105 percent of the outstanding debt at the time of ratification, require Congress to get approval from a majority of state legislatures to take on more debt, require a supermajority in Congress for most tax hikes but allow deficit spending for wars and other national emergencies.

“I would say, the downside to our proposal is what you see is what you get. Some state lawmakers might not like a comma placement or how a T is crossed,” Dranias said. “The advantage to the [Balanced Budget Amendment] Task Force is states can see whatever they want.”

Dranias said some states limit to a balanced budget amendment. Other states require that a convention include a balanced budget amendment.

Herrell, the New Mexico legislator and co-founder of the Balanced Budget Amendment Task Force, doesn’t see a problem in counting the total number of states backing an amendment.

“It’s a hard argument that if the exact language isn’t the same it does not count toward 34 states,” Herrell said. “The

[Balanced Budget Amendment] Task Force has done an excellent job researching [state resolutions] and has seen enough proof. The task force would not be saying 29 if they were not certain. It should not have to be word for word.”

Both Dranias and Herrell stress that their group proposals are specific to a balanced budget amendment to allay concerns of a runaway convention. Further, both noted it would still take just 13 states to prevent ratification of any amendment that emerged from a theoretical runaway convention.

In a report last year broadly about Article V conventions, John Malcolm, director of the Edwin Meese III Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, wrote:

An Article V convention might propose an amendment to restore or expand the liberties of the American people, but it also could propose an amendment that diminishes the liberties of the American people, or of some of the people. While it is no doubt true that the ratification process itself, requiring support from three-fourths of the states (38 at present), decreases the likelihood of some radical proposal ultimately becoming part of our Constitution, it is worth recalling that 27 of the 33 proposed amendments that have been sent to the states for ratification achieved the requisite number, and that was before the age of the internet and social media-driven campaigns that can dramatically increase public pressure on those who are considering such an amendment and reduce the time devoted to thoughtful reflection.

The Compact for America points to support from conservative commentator George Will, economist Stephen Moore, and Americans for Tax Reform President Grover Norquist.

The Balanced Budget Amendment Task Force cites three prominent groups as “partnering organizations”: the National Federation for Independent Business, representing small business; the

American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative state policy group; and the Heartland Institute, a Chicago-based conservative think tank.

According to the task force, Indiana became the first state legislature to pass an Article V application to propose a balanced budget amendment on May 8, 1957.

In 1983, Missouri became the 32nd state legislature to vote for a proposed amendment. However, from 1988 to 2010, 16 states rescinded the applications out of fear regarding a runaway convention, bring the number down to 16.

Alabama began reversing the trend in 2011 at the urging of the task force. Then 13 more states followed: New Hampshire in 2012; Ohio in 2013; Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Michigan and Louisiana in 2014; South Dakota, North Dakota and Utah in 2015; Oklahoma in 2016; and Arizona this year.

*This article was originally published at . Used with permission.*

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## **The 5 Attacks on Churches This Week No One Told You About**

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticized for condemning the Palm Sunday attacks on churches in Egypt but failing to condemn attacks in his own country.

On the same day that two churches were bombed in Egypt, five churches in India— in five different states—were targeted (details below).

Church groups have called for extra security to be provided for churches in the run-up to Easter, and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the Egypt bombings but is not bothered about the blunt intimidation and assaults on Christians under his care,” Rev. Roger Gaikwad, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, told World Watch Monitor.

“Modi as usual wants to maintain a good international image. Such a statement (condemning attacks in Egypt) also bolsters the stereotype of Muslims as terrorists and Christians as people who are attacked because their proselytizing activities are inviting problems for themselves.”

The Evangelical Fellowship of India released a statement today (April 11), in which it criticized the “targeting of Christians on special days of worship, such as Palm Sunday” as “condemnable”.

“We urge the respective state governments and the central (federal) government to not only take note of these violations, but also to take action to curtail the non-state actors who function with impunity,” the statement read.

“It is important, especially now as we are in the Passion Week, for, going by the trends so far, it seems the incidents may escalate during Good Friday and Easter. It does not reflect well on the world’s largest democracy, if incidents like these continue to hound religious minorities.

“We also request that the state machinery be held accountable and responsible for enforcing the rule of law, so that minorities can live in peace and without fear,”

Four of the five states in which the incidents took place are ruled by the Hindu-nationalist BJP–Modi’s party. Meanwhile, so-called “anti-conversion laws”—which on the face of it

protect against forced conversions but in reality discriminate against minority groups by forbidding them from any evangelism—are in force in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, where one attack took place, while they are also soon likely to be introduced in the western state of Rajasthan, where another incident occurred. Such laws also used to be in force in another of the affected states—the southern state of Tamil Nadu—but were repealed after the ruling party lost all its parliamentary seats.

The National Council of Churches in India said the sudden spurt in anti-Christian violence is a “signal” that Hindu nationalist groups like the BJP and RSS “are going to use the communal card in the most blatant way”—by teaching majority-Hindus that minorities like Christians and Muslims present a threat to the Hindu nation.

Activist John Dayal added: “The rash of violence against Christians, disrupting Palm Sunday prayers, speaks of a heightened impunity, and, we suspect, a more direct collusion of police and local authorities.”

### **What Happened?**

The information below, detailing five incidents in five different states on Palm Sunday (April 9), was provided by the Evangelical Fellowship of India.

#### **Madhya Pradesh** (Sitabedi village, Khandwa district)

Hindu extremists accompanied by police personnel disrupted a church service. Police arrested the pastors and their wives, and other Christians, and took them to the local police station. Three pastors were detained under the under the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (“anti-conversion law”), but others were released that evening.

#### **Haryana** (Kaithal)

Hindu extremists disrupted the church service led by a pastor named Yashpal. The group “threatened and manhandled” the Christians and filed an official complaint at the local police station, alleging Christians had been forcing people to convert. Police then took the Christians into custody. The local inspector said it had been “protective custody” and that they were released after the allegations against them were found to be baseless.

**Uttar Pradesh** (Jahanpur village, Ghazipur district)

A mob beat up Krishna Paul, the leader of Believers Church, and handed him over to the police. He was released after local Christian leaders intervened and spoke to the police.

**Rajasthan** (Sri Ganganagar)

Hindu extremists disrupted the service at the church of God, and church leader Saji Mathew was arrested and taken into police custody, along with seven other Christians. Local villagers, with the help of a Hindu priest, had complained to the village chief that Christians had been “engaging in conversions.” The village chief then signed a complaint and gave it to the local police, who arrested the Christians. After other local Christian leaders pleaded with the police to release the Christians, they were set free later that night.

**Tamil Nadu** (Keeranur, Dindigul district)

Government officials disrupted private prayers at the house of a man named Gunasekaran. The officials took video clips and pictures of people praying and then told them to stop. They also told them to ask permission from the District Collector before praying again in the house. Gunasekaran’s extended family (about 20 people) have gathered in his house every Sunday for the last 24 years, for private prayers. Gunasekaran was forced to sign a piece of paper and told to report to the local government office the following day. The Evangelical Fellowship of India noted that the prayers are attended only

by family members and not by other members of the public, and that no loudspeaker system is used during the prayers. {eoa}

This article originally appeared on World Watch Monitor.

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# Deadly Flu Mutation Could Lead to Worst Pandemic in History

Leading scientists in the field of deadly flu epidemics are worried about what could be the granddaddy of them all, and say it could be right around the corner.

They're talking about the bird flu, also known as H7N9. Experts say it could be as bad as, or even more severe, than the worst global pandemic in recorded history. That was the Spanish flu outbreak of 1918, which killed an estimated 40 million people. That flu also originated in birds.

Alarms began sounding in the medical research community when scientists observed the bird flu was rapidly mutating and killing chickens in China. That's scary because until now, when chickens got the bird flu it was so mild, the chickens generally did not die from it. Now, however, the virus is far stronger and deadlier. Not only are chickens dying, they're dying fast, sometimes in just one day, and they're spreading it to other fowl.

The bird flu outbreak among chickens is ominous for humans.

"It makes us queasy," former global director of the World Health Organization's Influenza Program, Keiji Fukuda, told NPR, "Because it's a very visible way to see these

viruses as restless. Some of these changes are dead-end, but some are not. And this genetic mutation is not. It's becoming more lethal for poultry. For people? We're not sure."

Oftentimes flu viruses that circulate among animals are passed to people. That's already happening in China with the H7N9 bird flu strain. When people catch the bird flu from chickens, about a third of the humans die. It's already killed nearly 200 people this flu season (September to March). That's more deaths than in any single season since when it was first discovered in humans four years ago.

When it comes to containing flu outbreaks, the smartest virologists in the world are stumped by this one. Guan Yi who was instrumental in minimizing the swine flu, and SARS is pessimistic about this aggressive bird flu, mainly because it is changing so fast. "We're trying our best, but we still can't control this virus," He said, "It's too late for us to eradicate it."

This new virus presents a good-news, bad-news scenario.

The good news:

- The virus is easy to diagnose, and vaccines for chickens can be manufactured and administered quickly.
- Big cities like Shanghai have quickly shut down their live poultry markets when human cases are on the rise, which can keep it from spreading.

The bad news:

- New mutations of the bird flu virus are typically discovered in China, the site of many small poultry farms run by farmers who aren't well-educated about the threat of bird flu and who often hide evidence of infected birds because they are afraid of losing income.
- Worldwide travel, particularly on airplanes, means

outbreaks spread very rapidly.

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## **Is President Trump Planning Something in North Korea?**

Is President Donald Trump planning to take military action in North Korea in the coming days?

The short answer is that we simply don't know. Even if he were, he's made it abundantly clear he has no intention of tipping his hand prior to doing so.

"I don't have to tell you what I'm going to do in North Korea," he told a reporter during a news conference early on in his presidency. "And I don't have to tell you what I'm going to do with Iran. You know why? Because they shouldn't know."

There are signs, however, that something is afoot:

- Over the weekend, the Pentagon ordered the Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group to waters off the Korean Peninsula.
- Numerous news outlets are reporting China has positioned 150,000 troops on its border with North Korea.
- Sunday, National Security Adviser Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster said the president tasked the National Security Council to develop "a full range of options" to stop North Korea's nuclear threat.
- China, which had already cut off coal imports from North

Korea, has ordered shipping companies to return coal it already had back to their point of origin, the port of Nampo.

- Tuesday evening, the president is scheduled to have a “working dinner with senior military officials.”

Meanwhile, North Korean saber-rattling continued with the following response from its foreign ministry:

We will hold the U.S. wholly accountable for the catastrophic consequences to be entailed by its outrageous actions.

This goes to prove that the U.S. reckless moves for invading the DPRK have reached a serious phase of its scenario. If the U.S. dares opt for a military action, crying out for “preemptive attack” and “removal of the headquarters,” the DPRK is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the U.S.

Saturday will mark the 105th anniversary of the birth of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s grandfather, Kim Il-sung, who founded the communist nation in 1948. Typically, the date is celebrated with parades and military demonstrations, such as tests of its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons capabilities. {eoa}

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## **Is It Biblical for Christians to Host Passover Seders?**

I was a little surprised that Christianity Today published an article written by two rabbis, Yehiel Poupko and David Sandmel, who reject Yeshua as the Messiah, claiming that

Yeshua did not eat a Passover Seder with his disciples. Furthermore, they exhorted Christians to stop hosting Passover Seders. I want to respond their arguments, because I strongly disagree with both points. But first, let me share where I agree with them—and maybe this is the reason that Christianity Today allowed them the platform.

## **Where I Agree**

Something has changed.

About 25 years ago, when I began to travel as a Messianic Jewish teacher/evangelist, I never felt any animosity against me because I continued to live as a Jew or because I didn't connect to Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter (but also don't condemn those who do). However, over the past several years, I see more and more confusion over Messianic Judaism. Most of the confusion stems from non-Jewish believers feeling compelled to live as Jews or as ritually Torah observant—and then seek to “confront and convert” friends and family members, often with a less-than-humble attitude, to the point of alienation. I have received so many emails from wounded family members over the years.

The Hebrew Roots and One Law/Torah movements (click here to learn more about these movements) have stained the reputation of Messianic Judaism because the average Christian assumes we are one in the same. The main difference between Messianic Judaism and these other groups is this—Messianic Judaism encourages:

1. Jewish people to embrace Yeshua.
2. Jewish believers to continue to live as Jews, as the disciples did.
3. Non-Jewish believers to feel free to worship with us as equals in the kingdom, without having to embrace Jewishness (Acts 15).

The Hebrew Roots and One Law/Torah movements seek to compel

non-Jews to forsake all extra-biblical traditions and embrace Torah, meaning, to keep the Sabbath on the seventh day, celebrate Jewish feasts and holy days, keep kosher (Mosaic dietary laws), celebrate New Moons and to understand the Scriptures from a Hebraic mindset. I do agree with the last point, that the church would do well to have a more Jewish understanding of Yeshua (that is why I wrote *Identity Theft*), but I don't believe that non-Jewish believers are to be compelled to live as Jews.

*The influence of this movement is working its way into our churches and seminaries. It's dangerous in its implication that keeping the Old Covenant law is walking a "higher path," and is the only way to please God and receive His blessings. Nowhere in the Bible do we find Gentile believers being instructed to follow Levitical laws or Jewish customs.*

While I agree with the quote, it does seem Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to celebrate Passover (1 Cor. 5:7-8), and when Yeshua returns, all nations will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). It is not my place to tell people what they can and cannot celebrate. Non-Jews are free to embrace Jewish holidays, but should not be coerced. At the same time, I do understand the rabbis' concern.

## **Misusing the Symbols of Another**

The rabbis wrote, "adopting another's ritual shows a lack of respect. Even when pursued with the best of intentions, taking another faith's sacred ritual and transforming it into an expression of one's own tradition displays a misunderstanding of the complex nature of faith traditions." I recorded a video a few years back called, "Shofar Abuse" to express concern that many were not treating the sacred symbols of Judaism with proper respect.

For example, when I walk into a church and see a woman wearing a Jewish prayer shawl, I tremble inside, understanding that

for an Orthodox Jew, this is extremely disrespectful. I am sure that the woman loves Israel and the Jewish people and has no idea she is being a stumbling block. However, a prayer shawl or *tallit* is given to a Jewish *boy* at his Bar Mitzvah. It should not touch the ground and must be treated with respect. In orthodox synagogues, a woman would not wear one.

Can you see why the rabbis who wrote this article might have a point?

## **Where I Disagree**

Was the most famous Passover meal a Seder?

It is ironic that while rabbis admit there is no Passover meal more famous than the Last Supper, they claim it was not a Seder—that the Seder, as we know it today, only came about after the destruction of the Temple. It is true that Judaism went through a massive post-Temple reform in the years following 70 C.E.

Yochanan Ben Zakai led the movement to recreate Judaism in a way that the Temple would not be essential, as it was destroyed. Over time, the oral traditions were codified and put into writing. The rabbis correctly state, “The Seder ritual, as it is practiced today, did not exist at the time of Jesus. It was only fully developed by the rabbis in the years following the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.”

However, their conclusion that this means Yeshua did not participate in a Seder is absurd. This was just 40 years before 70 C.E.—where do they think these customs came from? They were not all simply invented in the years following the Temple’s demise. We see in Yeshua’s Seder many of the same things we see in a modern Seder. Apologist Michael Rydelnik agrees:

*Some examples include ritual hand washing, the breaking of bread or matzah, the use of red wine, reciting the Hallel*

*psalms (they sang a hymn after the meal), the anticipation of the messianic kingdom (Jesus said I won't drink of this cup until I drink it with you in the kingdom), eating ground-up bitter herbs (called the sop that Jesus passed to Judas). The great scholar Joachim Jeremias, in the Eucharistic Words of Christ, notes 14 of these clear associations with the Passover Seder. So, even if the Last Supper was not a Seder as practiced today, it certainly was an incipient Seder, as practiced before 70 CE.*

How can the traditional Haggadah (the book that guides us through the Passover Seder) claim that traditions go back to Rabbi Hillel, who died almost a decade *before* Jesus was born, if indeed everything started in 70 C.E.?

*Eating matzah, maror and haroset this way reminds us of how, in the days of the temple, Hillel would do so, making a sandwich of the Paschal lamb, matzah and maror, in order to observe the law "You shall eat it (the Pesach sacrifice) on matzah and maror."*

The New Testament also records that they were reclining as they ate: "While they were reclining at the table eating... (Mark 14:18, NIV). The Haggadah asks, "On all other nights, everyone sits up straight at the table, why on this night do we recline and eat at leisure?" Clearly this was a Seder. He breaks the matzah before the meal—just as we are to do—and then Yeshua takes wine after dinner, just as the Haggadah prescribes a third cup after the meal—the cup of redemption, and He would become our *ge'ula*, redemption.

## **A Better Question**

My question to the rabbis is this: How did such an overtly Messianic/Christian theme end up in the traditional Jewish Seder? I am referring to the Afikoman:

*Prior to the meal, this matzah was broken, wrapped in linen, and hidden away. Following the dinner, the matzah reappears. For the Messianic Jewish community, the afikomen symbolically represents the Messiah, as Jesus' body was broken, wrapped in linen, buried and raised on the third day.*

Not to mention that matzah is unleavened bread. Leaven represents sin. Yeshua was the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19, MEV)—without sin.

## **Can you Separate Passover from Yeshua?**

I know the rabbis are walking a tightrope in their article. On the one hand, they don't want to offend their Christian audience by saying, "Jesus was a fraud," (However, the truth remains that if traditional Judaism is correct—that the Messiah has not come—then Christianity is idolatry and Jesus was a counterfeit Messiah. Only one can be correct.) but neither do they want you to think it is possible for a believer to be inspired in their faith in Yeshua through a Jewish Passover Seder. They speak highly of Christianity, as well as traditional Judaism, while seeking to claim something akin to: "You have the Eucharist and we have the Passover meal—don't confuse them."

They correctly state, "For most of Christian history, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, replaced the Jewish Passover Seder." But that doesn't mean it was correct. They see Christianity as many who embrace replacement/reform theology do. They assume that all believers embrace the idea that the church has replaced Israel. We don't. And most of these replacements were done by anti-Semitic leaders, like Emperor Constantine, who sought to rid Christianity of any Jewish influence or St. John Chrysostom, who was so concerned about Judaism's influence on believers that he taught, "It is every Christian's duty to hate the Jews."

*The first Christians, Jewish and Gentile, were certainly*

*aware of the Hebrew calendar. Jewish Christians, the first to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, timed the observance in relation to Passover. Direct evidence for a more fully-formed Christian festival of Pascha (Easter) begins to appear in the mid-2nd century.*

That was more than 100 years after the Resurrection. Early Christians were familiar with the Passover story, as Paul refers to Yeshua as the Passover Lamb when writing the non-Jews in Corinth. John calls him the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and Peter uses the lamb symbolically to explain how Yeshua purchased us with His blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19). When explaining baptism as going from death to life, Paul uses the imagery of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, from the old life of slavery to the new life of freedom.

You simply cannot separate Christian or Messianic theology from the Passover story. Yes, Yeshua fulfills the Passover, but he doesn't cancel the traditional Passover. He would come to Jerusalem every year to celebrate, and it was no mistake He was crucified on Passover.

## **Identifying as Messianic Jews?**

And what about Jewish believers? Can we still celebrate Passover? Is it no longer our history if we believe Yeshua to be the Messiah? Many Chabad Jews believe that their deceased Rebbe is the Messiah (I saw a sign today that said of him, “Long live King Messiah”), but no one is telling them they can't celebrate Passover. And, of course, I love their description of Messianic Jews:

*In evangelical settings, the promotion of Christian Seders by those who identify as Messianic Jews and other such affiliations has also contributed to its growth.*

I don't identify as a Messianic Jew, in the way that a transgender may be male but identify as female. By using this terminology, they are gently saying there is no such thing as a Messianic Jew—only one who identifies as such.

## Conclusion

If I put myself in the place of the rabbis, I do understand their concern. They feel that a much larger worldwide movement is kidnapping their religious ceremonies and rituals, and adding Jesus. However, you cannot deny:

1. That without Judaism there is no Christianity.
2. Yeshua's original followers were Passover-celebrating Jews.
3. He established Passover as clearly pointing to His death and Resurrection by taking the unleavened bread and saying, "This is my body."

Therefore, yes, Christians can and should celebrate Passover (as they did in the early church). At the same time, they should be very sensitive to the Jewish people so as not to dishonor the Passover. The Church is called to provoke Israel to jealousy, not merely provoke her. {eoa}

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# Saeed Abedini: George O. Wood Is Deceived by the Spirit of Jezebel

After verbally attacking evangelist Franklin Graham on social media, Saeed Abedini turned his attention to George O. Wood.

“Head and General superintendent of Assemblies of God and Deception with the Spirit of Jezebel,” Abedini says. “I met Wood the last week I was in U.S. Before I got arrested and he asked me to connect AOG pastors of Iran with him and I did as the only contact person between AOG Iran and U.S. And one of the main reason Iran arrested me was to make connection of meetings with these two.”

Around the time of Abedini’s release from torture in Iranian prison, his wife Naghmeh’s personal letter about her husband’s abuse went viral.

Naghmeh reportedly received support from many, including Wood.

“When I got free I called Wood and talked to him and let him know about the other side of the story,” Abedini says.

Abedini then posted screenshots he claims are personal emails between him and Wood.

“I desire for the day when the two of you have only one story to tell,” Wood writes in one.

Abedini then demanded Wood repent for his compassion toward Naghmeh. When Wood refused, Abedini accused him of having the Spirit of Jezebel.

Wood wrote he had nothing to repent of and then wrote that he was ending the correspondence.

Abedini writes:

*Therefore, his regret never turned to repent and he stayed in his sin against me.*

*This story easily reflects and shows the real nude fallen Christianity situation in America and How spirit of Jezebel which is spirit of Controlling easily can deceive even the Head Pastors and leaders who care for them self so much more than others life and others reputation.*

*This short story clarifies how much some people care about their position and names who even they are ready to destroy others to keep themself up on the stage and fame, money and power.*

*This is a real story of Spirit of Jezebel having power in this country, Mega churches and denominations who stoped [sic] millions people going and joining the churches and we need true repentance .*

*These are real walls which separates people of God from each others by letters and denominations and doctrines, etc. and that's why Most of born again Christians don't go to any churches anymore today's in America as the Lords revealed to me months ago and I already shared on my Facebook.*

Mark Forrester, director of Public Relations and Communications at the Assemblies of God, declined to comment on the matter. {eoa}