

# The Spring Festivals

## Passover in Egypt and Jerusalem

by  
Dean & Susan Wheelock

And thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist,  
Your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.  
So you shall eat it in haste.  
It is the LORD's Passover.  
*Exodus 12:11*

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# ~ A Story of Religious ~ ~ Freedom ~

We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt,  
And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand;  
And the LORD showed signs and wonders Before our eyes,  
Great and severe, against Egypt,  
Pharaoh, and all his household.  
*Deuteronomy 6:21-22*

**T**he most cherished freedom that man can possess is religious freedom, to be free to worship the Creator God in "spirit and in truth." To most of us living in the western world of twentieth century civilization, religious freedom is pretty much taken for granted. Yet there are many places today where people are not free to worship the Creator God in the manner they believe to be correct. For example, China currently remains one of the principle nations where people are continually denied their religious freedom. There are also many Christians being persecuted in the fundamentalist Islamic nation of Iran. Jail and torture are the common methods used to force them to recant their belief that Jesus (*Y'shua*) is the Messiah, thereby forcing them to return to the Moslem faith.

Where exactly did religious freedom originate? Was it really in Philadelphia's Independence Hall in 1789 when the First Congress wrote the Bill of Rights that guaranteed religious freedom to the citizens of the new nation of the United States of America? Or, in fact, was religious freedom an issue many millennia earlier when the children of Israel were still subject to the Pharaoh of Egypt? Just what was the motive behind the cry "**Let my people go?**" True, a great motive was to escape physical slavery, but was not the freedom to worship God in the manner in which He reveals Himself also a primary motivation?

One cannot truly understand the Exodus story except in the context of religious freedom. But freedom has many facets to it. With freedom comes obligations. Our Messiah *Y'shua* said:

**"...If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."** (John 8:31-32)

Free from what? Free from the need to worship God at all? Free to worship in any bizarre way imaginable? That is not what *Y'shua* had in mind when He made the above statement. The people to whom He was talking thought they were already free:

**"They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free?'"**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house for ever: but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.'" (John 8:33-36)**

The lesson never learned by the children of Israel as they trudged through the wilderness, was that with true religious freedom comes equally true obligations. This is also the lesson that has not been learned by our modern societies, where religious freedom means:

**"...everyone did what was right in his own eyes."**

(Judges 21:25)

As we study the Passover, the Exodus, and the religious observances that emanated from that experience, we must always remember that obligation and obedience to the truth of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, are the legitimate daughters of religious freedom. License to sin, even in the guise of religion, is the illegitimate daughter which results from the casting off of true religion. In this manner 'religious freedom' becomes not true freedom, but a subtle kind of slavery to sin and to death.

If the children of Israel had only experienced Passover and the Exodus, they would have been liberated from their physical bondage. However, because they went on to Mt. Sinai and received the *Torah*, the instruction book of God, they were given the opportunity to experience true religious freedom, which is being able to freely give oneself to God in the fullest sense of the word. This can only be achieved when one accepts an obedient lifestyle to the standards set by Almighty God, and this lifestyle must be based upon the *Torah*. Once this crucial step is taken, then the redemption that comes through faith in Messiah can find full expression in Believers by the manner in which they live their lives.

## ~ The Roots of Passover ~

In order to fully appreciate the story of the Passover and the Exodus, we must go back in time four hundred and thirty years to the days of Abram (Heb. *Avram* = Ahv-rahm') who's name was later changed to *Avraham* (Ahv-rah-hahm'). God chose *Avram*, out of all men alive in the world at that time, to be the progenitor of a race of people that would be special to Him. We pick up the story at the point where God revealed Himself to *Avram*.

**"Now the LORD [*YHVH*] had said to Abram:**

**'Get out of your country,**

**From your kindred**

**And from your father's house,**

**To a land that I will show you.**

**I will make you a great nation;**

**I will bless you**

**And make your name great;**

**And you shall be a blessing.**

**I will bless those who bless you,**

**And I will curse him who curses you;**

**And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Gen. 12:1-3)**

*Avram* trusted God and departed from his father's house. He, along with his wife *Sarai* (Sah-rye') and his nephew *Lot* (Loht), moved into the land of Canaan and from that day forward lived in tents as strangers in a strange land.

*Avram* was very familiar with the idolatry of the Canaanites since he had grown up in the city of Ur of the Chaldees where (according to tradition) his father had been a manufacturer of idols as well as an official in the court of King Nimrod. However, (again according to tradition) *Avram*, at a very early age, forsook the idolatry of his father and began to search for and serve the one true God, then known as *El Shaddai* (Ehl Shahd-die' = God Almighty) the Creator of the universe. *Avram* was seventy-five years old when God first spoke directly to him, as recorded in the above passage.

Later, in the spring of that same year (the ancient calendar began in the fall), God again engaged *Avram* in conversation and instituted a formal agreement with him. This covenant is commonly known as the *Covenant Between the Parts*.

**"After these things the word of the LORD [YHVH] came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'"** (Gen. 15:1)

*Avram* protested that he was childless and wondered out loud how the promise would be fulfilled. God assured him that a physical child would be forthcoming from his own loins. However, God did not specify at this time who would be the mother. Not only would *Avram* have an heir, he would have a multitude of heirs:

**"Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"** (Gen. 15:5)

It was at this very point where *Avram* displayed that firm, trusting, belief that God could and would do what He had promised, even though *Sarai*, who had been barren all of her life, was now beyond the time in life when she could naturally bear children. It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that God considered *Avram* to be righteous.

**"And he believed in the LORD [YHVH], and He accounted it to him for righteousness."** (Gen. 15:6)

So now, *Avram* believed that he would have a multitude of descendants, as many as the stars in heaven. But God made an additional promise. Not only would *Avram* be the progenitor of many people, they would also inherit the land of the Canaanites.

**"Then He said to him, 'I am the LORD [YHVH] who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.'**

**"And he said, 'Lord, GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?'"** (Gen. 15:7-8)

#### ~ Cutting the Covenant ~

What followed was a formal covenant procedure as was commonly made between parties at that time. God instructed *Avram*:

**"...Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.'**

**"Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two."** (Gen. 15:9-10)

This ancient ceremony is where the modern term 'cutting a covenant' originated. The animals were slaughtered and cut in half. One half of each animal was placed on one side of a path, while the other halves were placed on the other side of the path. The two parties would walk together, side by side between the parts of the slaughtered animals. This action made the profound statement that if either party was to ever break the agreed upon terms of the covenant, they would expect to have their bodies cut asunder just as had been done to the animals.

The next verse seems rather incidental and pointless. Yet it is the inspired word of God and there is a reason for its inclusion.

**"And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away."** (Gen. 15:11)

How often have each of us made a commitment to God and then had the 'vultures' try and dissuade us from holding to that commitment? It was a credit to *Avram's* faith that he worked diligently to keep the vultures from devouring the covenant sacrifice and thereby nullifying the promise.

**"Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him."**

**"Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.'"** (Gen. 15:12-16)

According to tradition, during his deep sleep *Avram* saw in vision all of the difficulties which were to fall upon his descendants, including the harsh slavery they were to be subjected to in Egypt. This is why **"...horror and great darkness fell upon him."** Many people desire to see into the future, but *Avram's* experience shows us that such a view might be better hidden from our eyes:

**"... sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."** (Matt. 6:34)

However, "all's well that ends well," and *Avram's* descendants were prophesied to eventually come out of that slavery experience with great abundance. This is, of course, a direct prophesy of the Exodus which was to take place a full four hundred and thirty years later:

**"But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would sojourn in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years."** (Acts 7:6)

**"And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years -- on that very same day -- it came to pass**

**that all the armies of the LORD [YHVH] went out from the land of Egypt."** (Ex. 12:40)

**"And this I say, that the law (Torah), which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ [Messiah], that it should make the promise of no effect."** (Gal. 3:17)

At first glance, this all seems rather puzzling. God said they will be oppressed for four hundred years, then two scriptures (Ex. 12:40 and Gal. 3:17) confirm that it was a full four hundred and thirty years from the cutting of the *Covenant Between the Parts* until the Exodus.

The explanation is really rather simple. The prophecy in Gen. 15:13 specifically addresses the length of time during which *Avram's* heirs would suffer persecution in a land that was not theirs. Since, at that time, *Avram* was not yet a father, the persecution of his descendants cannot be counted from the date of the *Covenant Between the Parts*.

So when did the persecution begin? According to Jewish tradition it began the day *Yitzchak* (Yeet'-zhak) was born. But his birth was to come only twenty-five years after this time, not the required thirty years. The Jews get around this problem by saying that the events of Gen. 12:1-3 took place five years before verses 4-5. This scenario holds that *Avram* would have been seventy years old when God first appeared to him and it was at this time when *Avram* and his father left Ur of the Chaldees to settle in Haran. They go on to claim that *Avram* left Haran five years later, moving into Canaan when he was seventy-five years old. This view has one problem. *Avram* was told to leave his father's house. According to the above scenario he waited five full years before making this move. Yet the scripture seems to indicate that he left immediately:

**"So Abram departed as the LORD [YHVH] had spoken to him ... And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."** (Gen. 12:4)

It is this writer's opinion that a better solution to the problem is found in the following passage:

**"So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac (Yitzchak) was weaned.**

**"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely Isaac.'" (Gen. 21:8-10)**

While it may seem strange by modern standards (when many babies are not even breast fed) for a child to not be weaned until the age of five, it is not an unheard of custom in some cultures even to this day. However, it is here that scripture records the persecution to have begun. According to tradition, Ishmael brought idols into the tent of *Avraham* and *Sarah*. He also shot arrows at *Yitzchak* pretending to be shooting at a bird, because he was jealous, knowing that *Yitzchak* was heir to the promise. It is also interesting to note that tradition tells us *Yitzchak* was born on *Nisan 15* and that the Weaning Feast was held on his birthday. If this initial act

of persecution is, in fact, a full thirty years after the cutting of the *Covenant Between the Parts*, and it began on *Nisan 15*, then a full four hundred years of persecution would bring us to the very day of the Exodus.

Based on this scenario, further chronological study reveals that the children of Israel spent a total of two-hundred and fifteen years in Egypt. (The Jewish scenario says it was two-hundred and ten years.) The actual amount of time they were in total slavery cannot be definitely known. Again, the Jews say the children of Israel lived ninety-four years in Egypt before slavery and one hundred sixteen years in bondage. These lengths seem about right, but if one holds to the two-hundred and fifteen year theory, then it is necessary to add five years to one of those figures. Since the children of Israel were already in slavery when Moses was born, and he did not return to lead them out of slavery until he was eighty years old, it stands to reason that they had to have been in slavery in excess of eighty years.

### ~ Sealing the Covenant ~

Now back to the *Covenant Between the Parts*:

**"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.**

**"On the same day the LORD [YHVH] made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates--...'" (Gen. 15:17-18)**

Please note that *Avram* never did walk between the parts. Apparently he was asleep. If not asleep, he merely watched as God, in the form of a **"...smoking oven and a burning torch..."**, cut the covenant entirely on His own. This fact is confirmed in the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Khah-deh-shah' = the Renewed Covenant):

**"For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ..." (Heb. 6:13)**

The *Covenant Between the Parts* did not depend upon *Avram* or anything he or his descendants might do, it depended entirely upon the promise of Almighty God (*El Shaddai*). Let us never forget this great truth as it has profound meaning to all Believers. The promise of salvation is dependent entirely upon the promise of God and the sacrifice of *Y'shua*.

Undoubtedly the **"...smoking oven and ... burning torch..."** devoured the sacrificial offerings that *Avram* had prepared. Since this same night would eventually be the Passover, it was important that what remained of the prepared animals be completely burned before morning. It is interesting to note that the selection of animals and birds for this sacrifice cover many of the flesh sacrifices that would later be instituted by God as a part of the Levitical system. The heifer can stand for both the red heifer sacrifice (Num. 16) and the burnt offering (Lev. 1). The female goat is a satisfactory 'peace offering' and 'trespass offering,' the 'peace offering' being the exact same type of sacrifice as the Passover lamb except it had to be a male. (Lev. 3 and 5). The birds were also legal for

'trespass offerings' (Lev. 5), while the ram was often used for special offerings on Festivals.

One last comment, the "...smoking oven and ... burning torch..." are also reminders of the Exodus when God led and protected the children of Israel:

**"And the LORD [YHVH] went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night."**

(Ex. 13:21)

The parallels between this first recorded 'Passover' type and the Passover of Exodus are quite phenomenal:

- ◆ Both events occurred on the very same night of the year.
- ◆ The animals were slaughtered in the afternoon and were consumed at night.
- ◆ The *Covenant Between the Parts* prophesied the length of time the persecution would last, while the Passover/Exodus brought that persecution to a close.
- ◆ In both cases, it was the power of God which brought the event to pass. The sole responsibility of *Avram*, and the children of Israel, was to step out in faith.
- ◆ The vultures tried to devour the sacrifice in Canaan while the 'vultures,' in the form of Pharaoh and his army, tried to devour the children of Israel.

~ ~ ~

## ~ The Egyptian ~

### ~ Passover ~

On the fourteenth day  
Of the first month at twilight  
Is the LORD's Passover.  
*Leviticus 23:5*



At this point the story shifts to the land of Egypt. Almost three hundred and fifty years had elapsed since the Covenant was initiated by God in the land of Canaan. During that time *Yitzchak* (Isaac) suffered the persecutions of his half-brother Ishmael, *Ya'akov* (Jacob) endured the deceptions of Laban and the hatred of Esau, and *Yoseif* (Joseph) was sold into slavery by his own brothers and spent ten years in an Egyptian prison. Exactly what took place after the children of Israel moved to Egypt, and all of the twelve sons of *Ya'akov* died, is unclear. However, a few facts are known from scripture and some additional things can be pieced together from secular historical records and speculation.

It is known that sometime during the second millennium BCE, (Before the Common Era) Egypt was conquered by a Semitic tribe from Asia called the *Hyksos* (Hick'-sohs) Exact dates are difficult to determine in Egyptian history, but this change in government is believed to have taken place about

1720 BCE. It is probable that the *Hyksos* were already in power when *Yoseif* (Joseph) was taken there as a slave. The high regard Pharaoh had for *Yoseif*, and why he was so readily put into the position of second in command (right below the Pharaoh himself) over the entire nation of Egypt, can be partially explained by the fact that they both came from the same racial stock. The *Hyksos* rulers may have known the ancestral family of *Yoseif* by reputation, if not in actual fact. Of course, the primary reason *Yoseif* was vaulted into a position of power was because God wanted him placed there.

But times change. Sometime after the death of *Yoseif*, the Egyptians rose up in rebellion against the Semitic *Hyksos* and took back control of their government, placing one of their own people into the office of Pharaoh. According to historians, the *Hyksos* then left Egypt and returned to their homeland in the east. However, the children of Israel remained as sheep herders in the land of Goshen.

At some point the new government decided to do something about the 'Israeli problem' which was being perceived as a growing threat within their country. (Sound familiar?) For one thing, the Israelites were speedily growing in number, as a result of the blessings of fertility given them by Almighty God.

Race was another factor. The children of Israel were descended from one of Noah's preferred sons, Shem, while the Egyptians are descended from *Mitzraim* (Meetz-rye-eem) the son of Ham, who had seen "...the nakedness of his father (Noah)..." (Gen. 9:23). (In the scriptures the Hebrew name for Egypt is *Mitzraim*.) Since the Israelites were also distant relatives of the *Hyksos*, it would be natural for the Egyptians to fear that they might rise up in rebellion against the Egyptians should the *Hyksos* decide to return:

**"And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.**

**"But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.**

**"Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.'"**

(Ex. 1:6-10)

The solution was to bring the children of Israel into a system of slavery and have them perform all of the undesirable work, so the Egyptians could enjoy a higher standard of living. (There really is nothing new under the sun.):

**"Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses."**

(Ex. 1:11)

Many have wondered how the Egyptians could enslave a vigorous people who were greater in number than their oppressors. According to the *Midrash* (a collection of stories and legends of the Jews) it was done in a very subtle way.

First the Pharaoh announced his intention to begin an extensive building program. He offered the children of Israel

high wages to become a part of the construction team, selling the idea as a patriotic thing to do. Pharaoh even participated personally for a short time as a public relations gesture. Initially, native Egyptians labored right along side of the Israelite workers, both of whom were paid handsomely. In addition, there was a 'mixed multitude' of people; workers from many countries and several different ethnic groups, both Semitic and non-Semitic. However, as time went on, the Egyptian workers began to disappear, a few each day, until only the Israelites and the 'mixed multitude' were left on the job site. It was already too late when the children of Israel discovered that the missing Egyptians had become armed and trained into an army of taskmasters. To make matters even worse, the Israelites were required to give back all of the money they had 'earned' during the first sixteen months of the project. But God was still with them, even if they did not realize it at that time:

**"But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor."** (Ex. 1:12-13)

In order to stop the Israelite population explosion, the Pharaoh instituted the first recorded practice of genocide. He decreed that the midwives kill all of the male babies born to Hebrew women. To their everlasting credit, the midwives refused to obey this harsh command:

**"Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them."** (Ex. 1:20-21)

#### ~ The Abuse of Total Slavery ~

It is difficult for us today to be able to imagine the horrible conditions faced by the children of Israel after they became enslaved in Egypt. Yet, if we are to fully understand the magnitude of God's redemptive act through the Passover, we must try and place ourselves into 'their shoes.' This has all been recorded for us so that we might understand the even greater magnitude of God's redemptive power in our own lives. There was a redemption from physical slavery and idolatry bringing them into religious freedom; yet they all went on to die. Ours is a redemption from a different kind of idolatry (which leads to the slavery of sin and death) and moves us on into the freedom of eternal life:

**"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."** (II Tim. 3:16-17)

Now then, let us try and step back in time and enter the land of Egypt as Hebrews in the era of the birth of Moses.

Only the older people could remember what it was like to be free. They spoke to their children of those ancient times in the dark of night, because during the daylight hours they were under the ever watchful eye of their taskmasters. The younger men and woman knew only the life of slavery for that is what

they were born into. They had to rise well before dawn, eat a hasty meal, and then go off to the construction site. Work went on until sunset, then they went home to do what ever chores needed to be accomplished before partaking of another simple meal and falling into bed. In all likelihood the women and children had to pick up the responsibilities for care of the flocks and herds, and the tilling of the gardens as well as all of their household chores. To top this off, the routine went on seven days a week without a break. Day in -- day out, week in -- week out, month in -- month out, year in -- year out.

To make matters worse, when a day off was allowed, the children of Israel were required to participate in the idolatrous worship of one of the many false gods held in reverence by the Egyptians. The God of their fathers, *Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov* could not be worshipped on the Sabbath day, because they had to work on the Sabbath. Yet the old traditional stories about the Patriarchs, and all that God had done for them, were passed down from generation to generation.

God, in the midst of this, blessed the children of Israel because of the promise that He had made to their fathers, and the Israelites grew strong and healthy and increased in number. The Egyptians lived in fear of the day when the Hebrews would rise up in rebellion against them and overwhelm them by their great numbers.

Next came the harsh decrees. All male babies were to be killed so the population explosion of the Hebrews could be thwarted and future potential Hebrew soldiers could be eliminated. They wanted to keep the girls around so they could give birth to more girls. Those girls could then become the slaves of the future, or serve as concubines to the Egyptian men. However, the midwives refused to cooperate, and made up stories about the vigor of the Hebrew women, saying they did not need the assistance of a midwife in order to bear children:

**"And the midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.'**

**"So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.'** (Ex. 1:19,22)

The river Nile was considered by the Egyptians to be one of their many gods. In effect, the Pharaoh decreed that all of the male Hebrew children be sacrificed to the god of the Nile.

#### ~ Enter Moses ~

This was the world into which Moses (Heb. *Moshe* = Moh-shay') was born. A tiny baby, brought into the world, entirely dependent upon his parents to provide for his every need, not knowing anything about the world into which he was being born or the great task that God had prepared for him to do.

*Moshe's* father was named *Amram* (Ahm-rahm') and his mother was named *Jochebed* (Heb. *Yocheved* = Yoh'-kheh-vehd) (Num. 26:59)). *Amram* was the son of *Kohath*, and the grandson of *Levi* (Ex. 6:16,18). They already had two other children. *Miriam* (Meer-ee-ahm') and *Aaron* (Ah-rohn').

According to tradition, when *Amram* heard about the Pharaoh's decree he decided it was best not to have any more children, so he publicly divorced his wife. But his daughter *Miriam* protested *Amram's* action and convinced him that his decision was even harsher than Pharaoh's. Under the Pharaoh's decree only the boy babies would be destroyed. Under *Amram's* decision, there would be no babies at all, whether boy or girl. *Amram* recanted and took *Yocheved* back as his wife:

**"And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.**

**"But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.**

**"Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river. And her maidens walked along the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.'" (Ex. 2:1-6)**

Tradition states that the parents named the baby *Yekusiel* (Yeh-koo'-see-ehl), but Pharaoh's daughter called him *Moshe* which means "to draw out" since she drew him out of the Nile river. This name was to have great significance, since *Moshe* was destined to be the one whom God would use to 'draw' the children of Israel out of Egypt and lead them through the Reed Sea into freedom.

There are other interesting traditions related to this event. The name of Pharaoh's daughter is said to be *Basya*. It is said that she had given up the idolatry of the Egyptians and converted to the religion of the Hebrews, worshipping only the one true God, and that when she saw *Moshe* she knew immediately that he was a Hebrew because he was circumcised.

It is also claimed that *Basya* suffered from leprosy and the reason she was walking by the river was because she wished to wash herself in hopes of relieving the symptoms of the disease. Egyptians were not known for their cleanliness, and bathing was not the 'in thing' in their society. It is said that Cleopatra (many centuries later) never took a bath in her entire life, but just smothered her odor with expensive perfumes.

The leprosy of the Bible is not the same disease that we know as leprosy today. In fact, the leprosy of the Bible was considered to always be sent from God as a result of some grievous sin in the particular individual's life, or as a means for God to give some kind of instruction to the sufferer. When a person was healed of leprosy it meant they had either stopped the sin that was causing it or had been forgiven. It is said that as soon as *Basya* touched *Moshe's* basket her leprosy was healed. This was considered to be a miraculous sign from God that He wanted *Basya* to save the baby and raise him as a Hebrew.

An Egyptian wet nurse was brought but the baby would not take milk from her. It was at this point that *Miriam* came forward.

**"Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?'**

**"And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed him.**

**"And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, 'Because I drew him out of the water.'" (Ex. 2:7-10)**

It must be remembered that the above non-scriptural portions of the narration are considered to be *Midrash*, that is, stories and legends that are not necessarily true in detail but are always considered to be true in what they teach. This is a Hebrew concept that every student of the Bible needs to understand, for even some portions of scripture are, in fact, *Midrash*. The truth of the above *Midrash* is that God was with *Moshe* from before conception and watched over him and took care of his needs throughout his entire life. Whether it occurred exactly as the *Midrash* states cannot be known at this time. When we meet *Moshe* in the resurrection we can ask him. The truth of the matter is that God had a great mission for *Moshe* to accomplish during his lifetime. Be it also known that God has a mission for each of us to accomplish, and that He takes care of our every need as well.

### ~ The Beginning of Freedom ~

Passover and the Exodus, taken together, are symbols of redemption from slavery and the gaining of freedom. But the freedom of the children of Israel did not begin with the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt, the removal of the Israelites from the land, or the crossing of the Reed Sea. Their freedom really had its birth when the women of Israel refused to give up their male babies to the demands of Pharaoh. This is where God's plan of redemption started, in the minds and hearts of His people when they refused to do what was wrong just because it was expedient. Even though the people of God were not to see the fruition of their just cause for another eighty years, nevertheless, this is where it all began. Let us thank God for their rich example and commit to follow that example in our own lives.

### ~ The Life of Moshe ~

The Scriptures give no specific details about the first forty years of *Moshe's* life. Tradition tells us that *Moshe* was reared in the court of Pharaoh and thereby obtained a worldly education. Although his early years may have been spent in the rich world of the Court, eventually, at age forty, *Moshe* remembered who he was and desired to see at first hand the plight of his native people:

**"Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.**



"And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, 'Why are you striking your companion?'"

"Then he said, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' So Moses feared and said, 'Surely this thing is known!'" (Ex. 2:11-14)

Why did *Moshe* want to get involved with the Israelites? After all, he had it made, he was a member of the royal family:

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ [*Messiah*] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." (Heb. 11:24-26)

*Moshe*, like all true Believers of every age, had caught the vision of the need for redemption. His vision was one of freedom from all types of oppression; whether physical, mental or spiritual. Later on, this vision of freedom would be written into the very constitution of Israel in the form of the Jubilee:

"And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family." (Lev. 25:10)

What a different world we would live in if all the earth's people followed the *Torah* of God. Everyone would have true freedom, and everyone would dwell in peace within their own families, and those who, because of circumstances, had sold themselves into servitude would be set free and their family possessions returned to them every fiftieth year. The day of freedom is coming, when *Messiah* will return to establish the Kingdom of God, under the righteous rule of *Torah*, on this earth. May He come speedily and in our time.

*Moshe* made the common mistake of trying to bring redemption to his people by his own power, through his own hand, by killing the Egyptian who was oppressing one of his brethren. However, redemption through human resources just does not work. *Moshe* learned this lesson the hard way:

"When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian ..." (Ex. 2:15)

Proper training can sometimes take a very long time. In *Moshe's* case it took another forty years before both he and the children of Israel were sufficiently prepared for redemption. *Moshe* needed all that time in order to learn humility and contentment as a simple shepherd in a foreign land. Meanwhile, the children of Israel had to experience so heavy an oppression that they, as a people, began to cry out to God for relief:

"Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses." (Ex. 2:21)

"Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because

of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

"So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them." (Ex. 2:23-25)

~ ~ ~

## ~ The Redemption ~ ~ Process ~

Because the LORD loves you,  
And because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers,  
The LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand,  
And redeemed you from the house of bondage,  
From the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.  
*Deuteronomy 7:8*

### ~ The Slide Into Slavery ~

There are a number of steps which God used to prepare both *Moshe* and the children of Israel for their redemption into freedom. A number of those steps have already been covered, others need to be mentioned at this point:

- ◆ Before a people can be redeemed they must have previously belonged to someone. In this case, God had taken the children of Israel as His own when He cut the covenant with *Avram*. In fact, they would not even exist if God had not caused the miraculous birth of *Yitzchak*.
- ◆ As long as the children of Israel were attached to God there was no need for redemption. This status existed during the lifetimes of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak* and *Ya'akov* (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).
- ◆ At some point the children of Israel needed to become separated from God so that redemption would be necessary. This occurred after the death of *Ya'akov*, for he was the last of the Patriarchs to have spoken directly with God.
- ◆ The children of Israel were only supposed to be sojourning in the land of Egypt as guests. However, because of their lust for the 'good life' in Egypt, they allowed themselves to stay on after the famine had ceased. This common human mistake led to their eventually being sold into slavery.

### ~ Realizing the Need for Redemption ~

The next phase in the redemption process was for the children of Israel to recognize their need for release from slavery, and to identify from where that release must come. Since God was dealing with a group of people, and not with an object that had been pawned (like a gold watch), it was necessary for those people to come to an understanding that

redemption was needed. It took many years of slavery but finally the children of Israel understood their need for God's deliverance. (See Ex. 2:23-25).

### ~ The Redeemer Reveals Himself ~

Redemption cannot take place without both a Redeemer and something (in this case someone) that needs to be liberated. In scripture the function of redeemer was required to be performed by someone who was a kinsman to the person needing release. This gave rise to the term "kinsman redeemer," and it was this principle that was used by Boaz when he redeemed Ruth. (See the book of Ruth.):

**"Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger's family, after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One ... in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself."**

(Lev. 25:47,49)

The intended redeemer must come forward and reveal himself so that all will know who intends to perform this righteous act. If someone closer of kin hears about the proposed redemption, and wishes to perform the redemption himself, then he must act to replace the one who first stated his intention.

Thus, God must now reveal Himself and state His intention to be the 'kinsman redeemer' for His people, the children of Israel. Not only were the children of Israel chosen by God to be His people, they were also in the position of being the Betrothed Bride of God. Thus, God's relationship to Israel was even closer than might first be suspected. (For more information on the marriage of God to Israel please write *Hebrew Roots* and request the tape series: *The Wedding of the Messiah*.)

God chose to first reveal His 'kinsman redeemer' intention to His servant *Moshe*, who was still dwelling in the land of Midian. At the mountain called Horeb (also known as Mt. Sinai) God appeared to *Moshe* in the form of a burning bush that was not consumed. God identified Himself and stated His intentions:

**"...I am the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' ...**

**"And the LORD [YHVH] said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmaster, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites...'**

**"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."** (Ex. 3:6-8,10)

After protestations by *Moshe*, who apparently had no personal desire to return to the land of Egypt, he asked God to reveal His name so that *Moshe* could identify Him to the children of Israel:

**"And God said to Moses, 'Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh.' He continued, 'Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'**

**"And God further said to Moses, 'Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: YHVH [the LORD], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you:**

**"This shall be My name forever,  
This My appellation for all eternity."**

(Ex. 3:14-15 TNK)

The phrase *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* has been translated into English in a variety of ways. Most Christians are familiar with the King James Version which renders it; "I Am That I Am." Others prefer "I Am Who I Am." Most scholars today believe it might be better translated "I Will Be What I Will Be." In any case it is meant to convey the message that God is supreme and He is not bound by man's ideas or conventions. That is the important concept of the verse. In verse 15 the tetragrammaton (*YHVH*) is introduced as God's official name for the children of Israel. According to the footnote in the *Tanakh*, p. 88; "The name *YHVH* is here associated with the root *hayah* 'to be.'"

As Believers, we have been given the profound privilege of addressing God as "Our Father," and His Son by His given name "Y'shua."

*(We realize this is a touchy subject for many people who adhere to the belief that we must address God in terms of the 'correct sacred names.' It is not our intention to judge anyone in this matter and we sincerely hope you will extend us the same courtesy. However, it must be said that we have received several different opinions from our readers, as to the exact pronunciation of YHVH and the Messiah's name. We prefer to use "Our Father" and "Y'shua" at this time. Perhaps our view will change as time goes on. Please do not be offended if we do not conform to your particular view in this matter. Rather, let us all continue to "...study to show ourselves approved...").*

### ~ Negotiations ~

At this point, a series of negotiations begin between *YHVH* and *Moshe*. *Moshe* did not really want the job and tried to duck out of it. This obviously irritated *YHVH* and He agreed to let *Aaron*, *Moshe's* older brother, become the spokesman and assist him with the task at hand. So, *Moshe* became the mediator between the 'kinsman redeemer,' *YHVH* and those who were crying for redemption, the children of Israel.

### ~ Circumcision Revisited ~

*Moshe* had spent forty years in the land of Midian where he married the daughter of Jethro, a Midianite priest. Since circumcision was not a custom in that country, *Moshe* had not inflicted the covenant mark of *Brit Mila*, (Breet Mee-lah' = circumcision) on his oldest son, Gershom. There is no record that the children of Israel had forsaken *Brit Mila*, in fact, Scripture indicates they had continued in this practice, since it is not recorded that mass circumcising took place prior to the first Passover. This would agree with the fact that God still

considered them to be the 'children of promise' and that they had accepted that status through *Brit Mila*.

But how would it look if *Moshe* were to come into the camp of Israel, claiming to be the one that God had commissioned to lead them to freedom, and have it discovered that his own son did not carry the covenant mark? Would the children of Israel have believed him? No way! So God halted the trip to Egypt so that some very important business could be completed:

**"And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD [YHVH] met him and sought to kill him.**

**"Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, 'Surely you are a husband of blood to me!'**

**"So He let him go. Then she said, 'You are a husband of blood!' -- because of the circumcision." (Ex. 4:24-26)**

At this point Zipporah, Gershom, and their other child, returned to Midian. They rejoined *Moshe* after the Israelites had left Egypt, when Zipporah's father came to visit:

**"And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, ... took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, with her two sons, ..." (Ex. 18:1-3)**

According to tradition, the other son, Eliezer, had been circumcised at birth. It is thought that *Moshe* and Jethro had agreed to a compromise where the oldest son would remain uncircumcised while the younger would carry the covenant mark.

### ~ God Judges Egypt ~

It is not necessary to recount all of the details pertaining to the experiences *Moshe* and *Aaron* had dealing with Pharaoh and his court. However, it is necessary to make some comments about the plagues that God inflicted upon the people and land of the Egyptians.

Tradition teaches that it was about one year from the time that God spoke to *Moshe* through the burning bush, until the Exodus took place. Tradition also teaches that the ten plagues were spaced approximately one month apart. This could have been one of the reasons Pharaoh kept hardening his heart, for God allowed sufficient time between each plague for a certain amount of relief to be felt by the Egyptians. This would have given Pharaoh time to think that maybe the trouble was all over, and that *Moshe* and *Aaron* would stop plaguing him with their demands.

In order to understand why God chose to perform the plagues that He did, one needs to understand some background about the religious scene in Egypt -- one of the most idolatrous societies on the face of the earth at that time. They had a vast array of gods, including the Pharaoh himself, which demanded worship in various repulsive ways. All of the plagues involved revealing the impotence of the gods of Egypt in some way.

The first set of three plagues, were visited upon the children of Israel as well as the Egyptians:

- ◆ *The Plague of Blood*. - The people of Egypt worshipped the Nile River because it was the source of water for the growing of their crops. Each spring

the river flooded, bringing fertile topsoil down from upstream, making for rich crops.

- ◆ *The Plague of Frogs* - The frog was connected with one of the most ancient of Egyptian religious practices.
- ◆ *The Plague of Lice* - This plague involved the dust of the earth. The soil, because of its fertility, was also an object of worship.

From this point on the plagues were inflicted only upon the Egyptians, the Israelites having now come under the divine protection of *YHVH*, the God of *Avraham*, *Yitzhak*, and *Ya'akov*. The second set of three plagues were:

- ◆ *The Plague of Flies* - Again, an object of worship in the idolatrous system of Egyptian religion became the source of their misery.
- ◆ *The Plague on the Cattle* - Some of the primary gods worshipped by the Egyptians were represented by cattle. The cow represented Hathor while the bull stood for both Mnevis and Apis.
- ◆ *The Plague of Boils* - When the boils broke out on both man and beast it was not only a direct attack on all of the animal gods of Egypt, but also upon the chief god of the land, Pharaoh himself, who also suffered right along with everyone else.

As time drew near to the scheduled date of the Passover/Exodus, the plagues became progressively more severe:

- ◆ *The Plague of Hail* - God sent down a plague on all of the gods of Egypt, whether they were in the form of men, animals, or the earth.
- ◆ *The Plague of Locusts* - Winged creatures were also an object of worship in ancient Egypt. Once again, God used a symbol of their idolatry as a source of punishment for the severity of the slavery which they had inflicted upon the children of Israel.
- ◆ *The Plague of Darkness* - One of the main objects of worship in all ancient societies that were not tied to the Creator God, was worship of the sun. What better way to show the impotence of the sungod than to have it completely obliterated from view for three full days.

### ~ Israel Prepares to Leave ~

During the *Plague of Darkness* the children of Israel, dwelling together in the land of Goshen, were said to have enjoyed normal sunlight each of the three days. It may have been at the beginning of this plague when the tenth day of *Nisan* arrived and the children of Israel selected their Passover lambs. The timing for this plan had been set in motion previously by God, when He proclaimed a new beginning to the sacred year:

**"Now the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.**

**"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: "On the tenth *day* of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.""** (Ex. 12:1-5)

Even though the children of Israel had been forced into the slavery of making bricks and building cities for Pharaoh, they still remained shepherds at heart. They had managed to maintain their herds and flocks, probably through the diligent efforts of the women and children, so sufficient lambs for the Passover did not seem to be an issue.

True release from bondage began here, at this point, in the minds and hearts of the children of Israel when they determined to follow God's instructions and set aside their lambs for sacrifice. This exemplified the ultimate expression of religious freedom, which is to obey the Creator God of the universe no matter what the price. By agreeing to God's command to select lambs for sacrifice, they bravely expressed their religious freedom while yet in the land of sin, idolatry and slavery. Why was it an act of bravery? Because to sacrifice a lamb was an extreme affront to the Egyptians, for the sheep and goats were also considered to be manifestations of some of their gods. In effect, the children of Israel were preparing to sacrifice the gods of the Egyptians.

The power of the ancient pagan gods rested in the minds of the people who worshipped them. In all likelihood, the vast majority of Egyptians attributed the disasters they had experienced over the previous several months to the anger of the various gods who possibly were at war with one another. Thus, if one of the powerful gods became angry with the god of the Nile River, he might punish the Nile god by turning its waters into blood. Or, perhaps the god of the Nile was displeased with the people of Egypt and he turned himself into blood. Such was the reasoning of the ancient pagan mind.

This being their mind set, it seems probable that the Egyptians saw the God of Israel as being another pagan deity who was far more powerful than any of their local gods. Therefore, they came to the place where their desire to have the children of Israel leave their midst, and take their God with them, became stronger than their desire to retain their accumulated material wealth. It is also quite possible that the Egyptian people considered *Moshe* himself to be a god.

As the *Plague of Darkness* receded, the children of Israel went out to receive from the Egyptian people that which God had previously instructed them to take:

**"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'I will bring yet one *more* plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets *you* go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.'**

**"And the LORD [YHVH] gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses *was* very**

**great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people."** (Ex. 11:1-3)

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## ~ *The First Passover* ~

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them,  
Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families,  
And kill the Passover lamb.  
*Exodus 12:21*



The symbolism of the Passover and Exodus is profound, and its relationship to the sacrifice of the Messiah, and the conversion experience of the Believer, is extensive. This profound, extensive symbolism is exactly what God intended when He performed this mighty act of redemption for the children of Israel. He intended for it to become a festival season that would be observed throughout the generations, so that the children of Israel would never forget how God had redeemed them from their slavery in Egypt and made them His very own people. As we will see later, Passover was also considered to be a prophetic feast, foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah to redeem His people:

**"Now you shall keep it [*the lamb*] until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight [*between the two evenings*]. And they shall take *some* of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire -- its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire."** (Ex. 12:6-10)

An air of uncertainty must have been ripe among the firstborn children. No doubt they watched closely as their father took a hyssop branch and applied the blood to the doorposts and the lintel above the door of their home.

### ~ The Manner of Roasting ~

A question sometimes arises as to the manner in which the animal was roasted, especially the details involving the entrails. The details are quite remarkable when one views them in light of the sacrifice of *Y'shua HaMashiach*.

First of all, like all sacrifices, the lamb had to be properly bled, for the children of Israel were not to eat the blood, nor were they to eat meat that had not been properly bled:

**"Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood *is* the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you**

**and your children after you, when you do *what is right in the sight of the LORD [YHVH].*"** (Deut. 12:23-25)

Once the lamb had been slain and bled (and the blood applied to the doorposts and lintel) the animal was gutted and skinned. A wooden stake was cut (in Temple days it was required to be of pomegranate wood) and inserted through the lamb from the mouth to the buttocks. The stake was then driven into the ground thus placing the lamb in an upright position. Sometimes a small piece of wood was inserted inside the lamb to spread the sides apart, thereby allowing heat from the fire to reach the inside of the animal. The entrails were hung outside the body, including being wrapped around the head. It was called a *Crown Sacrifice*.

What a profound picture of the sacrifice of *Y'shua*, who was crucified on an upright stake with a crown of thorns on His head. He was also bled, when the Roman centurion pierced His side with a spear and His blood and water gushed out upon the earth.

According to Jewish tradition, *Nisan 14* (Passover) fell on the fourth day of the week (Wednesday) in the year of the Egyptian Passover. This would place the Exodus of *Nisan 15*, on the fifth day of the week (Thursday), while the selecting of the Passover lambs on *Nisan 10* would have occurred on the previous Sabbath (Saturday).

The Egyptian Passover was a family affair, and it has been observed in that manner ever since its beginnings. That first year, each family (along with neighbors if the family was too small) killed their own lamb. The houses were probably fairly close together (as was common in the ancient world), so surely there was social intercourse between the neighboring homes up until the time the lambs had finished roasting and were taken into the homes. There must have been real festivity in the air. After all, this was the first time in decades that the children of Israel had been able to observe a religious rite. To make matters even better, they had already borrowed a great deal of gold, silver, jewelry and clothing from the Egyptians, who had actually pressed their belongings upon the Israelites asking them to please leave as soon as possible. In fact, the children of Israel had never seen so much wealth in all their lives. They were being paid for all those years of servitude:

**"Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold."**

**"And the LORD [YHVH] gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians...."** (Ex. 11:2-3)

#### ~ Eaten in Haste ~

But even greater things were yet to happen before they could enjoy all of their newly acquired wealth. The children had already been told what was to occur that night and, because of the events that were soon to come to pass, they were to remain fully dressed and ready to leave at a moments notice:

**"And thus you shall eat it: *with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's [YHVH's] Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,***

**both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD [YHVH]!"**

(Ex. 12:11-12)

It was necessary for the children of Israel to remain fully clothed and ready to flee when the call came. They were to eat the meal in haste and make sure that nothing was left of the lamb until morning. All remains; skin, bone and flesh, had to be burned. In other words, what remained became a burnt offering, though not a whole burnt offering, since most of the flesh had been eaten. Why was it all burned? Because it would have been inappropriate for any remains of the Passover lamb, who's blood was a symbol of the redemption of the firstborn, to be left in the idolatrous land of Egypt. It had to be removed completely from the land.

#### ~ Redemption for All Who Believe ~

At this point, the only way a firstborn Egyptian (or a member of the "mixed multitude") might be saved from destruction, was to believe that the God of the Israelites was the one and only God. They then had to become grafted into the nation of Israel, to become Israelites through circumcision and by participation as a member of one of the families performing the Passover sacrifice. This way they too could come under the protection of the blood that had been placed on the doorposts and lintel. Apparently there were a great many people who choose to do this, for as it is written:

**"A mixed multitude went up with them ..."** (Ex. 12:38)

Notice also, that God said the purpose of this plague (v.12) was to "execute judgment" against all the gods of Egypt. *YHVH* was about to show, in a most dramatic way, that the pagan, so-called, gods of these idolatrous people were absolutely nothing more than the hopes and fears of their own minds. But the God of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak* and *Ya'akov*, the God of the children of Israel, was the all powerful God who could and would do exactly that which He had promised *Avraham* He would do, some four hundred and thirty years before, to the very day.

#### ~ The Death Angel Passes ~

**"And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD [YHVH] struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who *was* in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.**

**"So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was not a house where there was not one dead.*"**

(Ex. 12:29-30)

The destruction was complete and quick.

#### ~ Agony and Joy in Egypt ~

**"Then he [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise *and* go out from among my people,**

both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD [YHVH] as you have said, also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." (Ex. 12:31-32)

Some believe that Pharaoh had *Moshe* and *Aaron* come to his palace during the night, but this interpretation does not harmonize with a previous scripture:

"Then Pharaoh said to him, 'Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!'

"And Moses said, 'You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.'" (Ex. 10:28-29)

The Hebrew word *kara* (kah-rah; Strong's #7121), translated 'called,' (v. 31) is used in a variety of ways. It can mean that someone is called into the presence of another, but it can also mean 'to cry out.'

The scriptures indicate that Pharaoh would send his court to *Moshe* to communicate his desire that the children of Israel leave immediately:

"And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, and all the people who follow you!' After that I will go out." (Ex. 11:8)

According to Jewish tradition, Pharaoh himself actually went to *Moshe* in the night, possibly accompanied by some of his servants. Since *Moshe* was forbidden to go out of his house, the Pharaoh had to speak to him through the window, so they did not actually see each other's faces. Pharaoh begged *Moshe* to take the children of Israel and leave immediately. When he asked *Moshe* what he could do to end the plague, *Moshe* told him to call out as loudly as he could that the children of Israel were free. Pharaoh did so, and his voice was magnified by God so that it was heard throughout the entire land of Egypt.

This may seem like a tall tale to us today, but would it have been anymore impossible for God to communicate their freedom to the children of Israel in this manner than it was to slay all the firstborn at midnight, part the Reed Sea, drown all of Pharaoh's army, or rain down *manna* for forty years in the wilderness? If we are going to believe the Scriptures we must admit this was a time of tremendous miracles. Is it possible that not all of the details are given to us? Of course. This is evident in many stories throughout the Bible. We are only told what we need to know.

Is it necessary for us to know exactly how the children of Israel learned of their release? No! The important thing is to understand that this was a night of redemption, and therefore a night to be much remembered. The details about how they learned of Pharaoh's decree is really incidental to the main point of the story. The main point is that what God said would happen, did happen:

"It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD [YHVH] will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service." (Ex. 12:25)

"Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it." (Ex. 12:8)

"It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD [YHVH] for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD [YHVH], a solemn observance [*shimmur*] for all the children of Israel throughout their generations." (Ex. 12:42)

It should be noted, that in the above verse, the double use of the word "solemn," in connection with this commanded observance, is not a part of the original Hebrew and should have been printed in italics indicating that it was added by the translator. The Hebrew word *shimmur* (sheem-moor'; Strong's #8107) means an 'observance' or a 'celebration,' and 'solemn' is not in any way connected to it.

They knew they were leaving and they knew that this special night was the night:

"And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, 'We shall all be dead.'

"So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders. Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing.

"And the LORD [YHVH] had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested*. Thus they plundered the Egyptians." (Ex. 12:33-36)

Yes, there was much joy among the children of Israel. After decades of slavery they were suddenly free from their oppression. Not only were they allowed to leave, their Egyptian hosts were actually insisting they leave:

"They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness [*KJV = high hand*] in the sight of all the Egyptians. For the Egyptians were burying all *their* firstborn, whom the LORD [YHVH] had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD [YHVH] had executed judgments." (Num. 33:3-4)

### ~ The Symbolic Names of Passover ~

As with all of the Festivals of the LORD, Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread carry a number of symbolic names:

- ◆ *Chag HaMatzot* (Khag Hah Mah'-tzoht) - Literally the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is believed that the children of Israel had to eat unleavened bread for seven days because of the pursuit by Pharaoh and his army. They could not stop long enough to allow sufficient time for bread to rise.
- ◆ *Chag HaPesach* (Khag Hah Peh'-sock) - The Festival of the Passover Offering. This name is taken from Ex. 34:25: "'You shall not offer the blood of My

**sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning."**

- ◆ *Chag HaAviv* (Khag Hah Ah-veev') - The Feast of Spring, or Feast of Green Ears. This indicated that the festival had to be held in the month when the green ears of barley appeared.
- ◆ *Z'man Heruteinu* (Zuh' mahn Heh-rooh-tay'-new) - Season of Our Liberation. This title obviously has to do with their release from slavery, into the service of God.

The most important of the symbols was, of course, the Passover lamb itself. It was the blood of the lamb that provided the protection that allowed the firstborn of Israel to be redeemed from the Angel of Death. In time, the children of Israel would come to understand that the Passover lamb was also a symbol of the long hoped for Messiah, who would redeem His people from their oppression by sin.

Two other symbols are also very important. They were the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. It is around these three food items: lamb, *matzoth* (unleavened bread) and *maror* (mah-roar' = bitter herbs) that the Passover observance was to be celebrated from year to year.

While the bitter herbs are only prescribed for the Passover meal, the unleavened bread is to be eaten throughout the entire seven day Festival:

**"So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD [YHVH] throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.**

**"On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat -- that only may be prepared by you.**

**"So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations you shall eat unleavened bread." (Ex. 12:14-20)**

Traditionally, the unleavened bread (*matzoth*) of the Passover season is considered to represent the 'bread of affliction.' It is striped and pierced, these marks being representations of the difficult struggle the children of Israel had under the hand of the Egyptians. However, the *matzoth* also became a symbol of redemption and freedom, for one can never truly appreciate freedom unless they first experience the

humiliation of slavery and oppression. Thus the unleavened bread (*matzoth*) simultaneously represents slavery, humility, and freedom; in other words, the process of redemption. Thus, *matzoth* is the 'bread of affliction' on the first night, but becomes the 'bread of redemption' during the remainder of the Festival:

**"You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life." (Deut. 16:3)**

The bitter herbs also represent the bitterness of slavery when the children of Israel were not allowed to live as free men and worship God in the manner God had dictated.

~ ~ ~

## ~ The Exodus ~ ~ From Egypt ~

And Moses said to the people:  
Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt,  
Out of the house of bondage;  
For by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place.  
*Exodus 13:3*

**T**he children of Israel were spared from the ravages of the Death Angel. Once redemption had come, they had to step out in faith.

At first it was easy, because they had received an abundance of material goods. But they were a large company of people and were not able to move at a very fast pace. (Over six hundred thousand men, plus women and children, has led to estimates of up to three million people, trekking out of Egypt.):

**"Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds -- a great deal of livestock. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves. ..." (Ex. 12:37-39)**

But the celebration did not last long. According to tradition, after three days head start, Pharaoh again went back on his word:

**"Now the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.'" (Ex. 14:1-2)**

**"Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned**

against the people; and they said, 'Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?'

"So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. ...

"So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon." (Ex. 14:5-7,9)

According to tradition it was on the sixth day of Unleavened Bread that Pharaoh and his army overtook the children of Israel. They were encamped at *Pi Hahiroth* (Pee Hah-hee-rote'). This was between a place called *Migdol* (Meeg'-dahl) and the Reed Sea and was across the sea from a place named *Baal Zephon* (Bah-ahl' Tzeh-phone').

In scripture, names are important to the story. In this case the names prove to be interesting. *Pi Hahiroth* is from a word that means "to spread out." Thus, the waters of the Reed Sea were spread out so the children of Israel could cross on dry land. *Baal* means husband, master or lord, while *Zephon* has to do with something 'cold.' This place, in English, might be called Lord of the North. According to one theory, the children of Israel actually crossed the Reed Sea on an ice bridge rather than on the bottom of the sea.

However, the word *Migdol* is the most interesting of these three names. Consider these scriptures:

**"He is the tower (*Migdol*) of salvation to His king,  
And shows mercy to His anointed,  
To David and his descendants forevermore."**

(II Sam. 22:51)

God was the 'tower of salvation' for the children of Israel as He stood by them:

**"And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night."** (Ex. 14:19-20)

Just as God was a 'tower of salvation' to the children of Israel, He promised, through the prophet Micah, to send a 'tower of the flock' to bring the Messianic Kingdom to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

**"In that day,' says the LORD [YHVH]  
'I will assemble the lame,  
I will gather the outcast  
And those whom I have afflicted;  
I will make the lame a remnant,  
And the outcast a strong nation;  
So the LORD [YHVH] will reign over them in  
Mount Zion  
From now on, even forever.  
And you, O tower of the flock, (*Migdol Eder*)  
The stronghold of the daughter of Zion  
To you it shall come,  
Even the former dominion shall come,**

**The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem."**

(Micah 4:6-8)

*Migdol Eder* (Meeg'-dahl Eh'-dehr) is the name of a place near Bethlehem along the road leading to Jerusalem. This is right in the area of *Ephratah*, on the northern edge of Bethlehem where the same prophet, Micah, foretold the birth of the Messiah was to take place:

**"But you, Bethlehem Ephratah,  
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,  
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me  
The One to be ruler in Israel,  
Whose goings forth have been from of old,  
Even Everlasting."** (Micah 5:2)

There was a tower at *Migdol Eder* which was used by the shepherds to keep watch over their flocks. This may seem a bit unusual, as it is not customary to build a tower as an aid in keeping watch over sheep. But these were not ordinary sheep. This was the very area where the lambs were bred and raised for the Passover sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Jewish law, the Temple offerings had to be raised within a certain distance of the Temple itself. *Ephratah* and *Migdol Eder* came within that area, but the major portion of Bethlehem did not. *Y'shua* (*the Tower of the Flock*) was born near 'the tower of the flock' (*Migdol Eder*) in the Bethlehem district of *Ephratah*. Not only that, the shepherds that were watching over the flocks were probably all Levites. As servants of the Priesthood and the Temple, it was a part of their responsibility to make sure that all sacrificial animals were raised according to the ceremonial law.

What a marvelous tapestry our Creator God has woven. Everywhere we look there are additional examples of how He has taken great care to both conceal and allow to be revealed, these precious truths:

**"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,  
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter."** (Prov. 25:2)

~ Crossing On Faith ~

The children of Israel were a very normal, carnal group of people. This fact was born out repeatedly by their complaints and actions over the next year. Many have wondered how they could have experienced all of the marvelous miracles that God had performed for them, and then have turned so quickly into faithless whiners.

The answer is complex and lies hidden deep within the psyche of all men. But the fact of the matter is that the children of Israel did display remarkable faith when it was absolutely necessary for them to do so. The first example was when they proved willing to choose a lamb for ritual slaughter despite the fact that it meant killing one of the gods of their oppressors. The second example was when they willingly went to the homes of their Egyptian neighbors and borrowed valuables of silver, gold and jewelry. The third case was when they sacrificed their Passover lambs and placed the blood on the doorposts and lintel, believing that it would indeed protect them from the terrible plague to come.



The next example of faith was when they left the land of Egypt. Maybe they had no choice, since the Egyptians were so insistent that they leave. Yet, where were they going to go? How were they going to sustain themselves? Today, the Sinai peninsula is a barren desert. Was it the same in their day? The scriptures seem to indicate that it was.

The final act of faith came on the banks of the Reed Sea, but only after they cried out to God and confronted *Moshe* with their fear:

**"And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD [YHVH]."**

**"Then they said to Moses, 'Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?'* For *it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.*'"**

(Ex. 14:10-12)

From a human standpoint can we blame them? Would we have been any different? After all, they were not hearing the voice of God talking directly to them. How could they know if *Moshe* really had an open line to God or whether he was just making all this up?

Well, there were the plagues, that is true. But after six days of trekking through the hot desert this was getting to be a bit much. They probably thought they would walk out of Egypt and proceed directly up the coast to the land of Canaan. Now they were hemmed in between the Pharaoh's army and the Reed Sea, nowhere to turn but to either their own fears, or to God.

From our perspective we can see that God had redeemed His people of promise through His own might and strength. Pharaoh no longer had the right to claim them as his possession. Yet, Pharaoh wanted his 'daughter' back, for he did not think the redemption price was fair. After all, what did he get out of the deal? A devastated land, many dead, and now all his precious slaves were gone. But it was his own fault. He had been just as responsible for the 'hardening of his heart' as had been God. Of the twenty passages of scripture that refer to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, ten ascribe it to Pharaoh and ten to God.

### ~ Immersion in the Sea ~

The redemption price had been paid, and Pharaoh no longer had any claim. But he went after his former possession anyway. The analogy is to the Believer accepting the blood of Messiah as the redemption price for his sins, and then being pursued by *HaSatan* to return to sin before the next step that must be taken, which is Baptism:

**"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of the spiritual**

**Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ [Messiah]."**  
(1 Cor. 10:1-4)

The final step in the Believer's redemption process is to publicly proclaim one's faith through the ceremony of immersion (baptism). This removes the redeemed from any claim that might be made by the former owner, since it publicly states that the Believer is a willing recipient of the redemption. The same was true of the children of Israel:

**"And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD [YHVH], which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. "The LORD [YHVH] will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."**

**"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD [YHVH], when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."**

(Ex. 14:13-18)

By stepping into the Reed Sea, the children of Israel made a public statement that their faith was in God, and they were committed to follow Him. Even though they were motivated by fear, they must be given credit for going forward when they could have stayed back.

This is not the end of the story, in some ways it is only the beginning, for *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost), *Rosh HaShanah* (Feast of Trumpets), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) and *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles) still lay ahead. Redemption is only the first step in the great master plan laid out by the Creator God of the universe, and revealed through His Festivals.

At this point, the pillar of cloud stood between the camp of Israel and the army of Pharaoh. On the Egyptian side was a thick darkness, like the darkness of sin, while on the Israeli side there was a pillar of light, like the light of Messiah. The children of Israel could see clearly now, and there was only one path to follow, and that path led to God and His way of life:

**"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD [YHVH] caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen."**  
(Ex. 14:21-23)

The wind blew from the east, meaning that it was coming from the direction of *Baal Zephon* (The Lord of the North). The crossing took place at night, and according to Jewish tradition it was the night portion of the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. An alternative view, commonly held by Believers in

*Y'shua*, is that the crossing took place on the night portion of the first day of the week, corresponding to the day of the Wave Sheaf Offering, and to the finding of the empty tomb of *Y'shua*. This theory is based on a counting of the encampments mentioned in the narrative:

**"Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth..."**

**"So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham ... [and then they were to] ...turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea..."**

(Ex. 12:37; 13:20; 14:2)

It is generally agreed that the children of Israel left during the night portion of *Nisan 15*. This would have put the first encampment at Succoth on Thursday night (*Nisan 16*), the second at Etham on Friday night, (*Nisan 17*) and the third at Pi Hahiroth on Saturday night (*Nisan 18*). The trek through the Reed Sea would then have occurred on Saturday after sunset which, by Hebrew calendar standards, would be the first day of the week, since the days always begin at sunset.

In Jewish tradition the third day of the Exodus is also significant, since that is the day they believe Pharaoh began his pursuit of the children of Israel.

~ Complete Release ~

**"It came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD [YHVH] looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD [YHVH] fights for them against the Egyptians.'**

**"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.'**

**"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD [YHVH] overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained."**  
(Ex. 14:24-28)

The "morning watch" fell between, what we would call, two and six in the morning. This meant the children of Israel must have gone into the sea at a much earlier time, in order for all three million people and 'much livestock' to have completed their crossing.

This also completed the immersion (baptism) of the children of Israel. Now all vestiges of their old life had been obliterated and they were free to move on to Mt. Sinai, for *Shavu'ot*, (Pentecost) to learn what kind of obedience their new Master would require of them. God now owned Israel and had become their 'Kinsman Redeemer.' He had obtained the right to call the shots. However, God's rules would be fair and equitable, and would be driven by mercy rather than malice:

**"And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. But as a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee."**  
(Lev. 25:39-40)

Children are never treated as slaves, and neither is a wife. At this point, Israel was both a betrothed bride and God's children. Either way you look at it, they certainly had a far better Master than when they dwelt in the house of Pharaoh.

~ The Song of Celebration ~

The story of the Exodus ends with the children of Israel seeing the bodies of Pharaoh's army washing up on shore. There was no doubt in their mind that they had seen the last of Egypt and the Egyptians. What a blessed relief it must have been.

There is some controversy as to whether Pharaoh himself actually died in the waters of the sea or not. One tradition has him becoming a Believer in the God of the Israelites and moving on to become the king of Ninevah. Thus it was to the Pharaoh of Egypt that Jonah was sent and this is supposedly why they repented. The Pharaoh finally knew that when God spoke, he was supposed to listen.

However, Psalm 136 seems to indicate that Pharaoh died along with the rest of his army:

**"But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,  
For his mercy endures forever."** (Psalm 136:15)

This beautiful Psalm has become a part of the traditional Passover service (*Seder*) as observed over the centuries by the Jewish people, in remembrance of their redemption from the slavery of Egypt.

*Moshe* too, composed a beautiful song about all the events that had just happened. That song is written for us in Exodus 15. It is a mixture of sharp imagery of both the horror and the triumph of the days events. In Hebrew it is called simply *shirah* (shee-rah') which means 'song' or 'singing.' It was meant to be sung, although we do not know the original melody. That is our loss, for it would be far more memorable if it could be learned as music.

**"I will sing to the LORD [YHVH],  
For He has triumphed gloriously!  
The horse and its rider  
He has thrown into the sea!  
The LORD [YHVH] is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation;  
He is my God and I will praise Him;  
My father's God, and I will exalt Him."** (Ex. 15:1-2)

The phrase that states; **"He has become my salvation;"** literally says that **"He has become my *Y'shuah*."** It means: '*something saved, deliverance, aid, victory, prosperity.*'

Other references to the Messiah include three references to "Your right hand," verses 6 and 11, and "Your arm," verse 16.

The Hebrew word for 'right hand' is *Yamin* (yah-meen') and has the connotation of being the stronger of the two hands. The

word for 'arm' is *zaroah* (zah-roh'-ah) and carries the meaning of 'force, might, power.' It is interesting to note that in the modern Jewish Passover *Seder* (Say'-der = set order, or order of the service) one of the objects on the *Seder* plate is the shankbone of a lamb. It is called the *Zaroah*, and is considered to be a symbol of the Passover lamb (which they do not partake of today) and also of the Messiah.

The story of Passover and the Exodus must be continually retold, so that it is never forgotten. This is the primary purpose for celebrating all of the Feasts of the LORD each year. The spring festivals, Passover and Pentecost, have already had dual fulfillment's in the past. One each, for the ancient physical children of Israel, and one each, for the fully redeemed children of Israel, the Believers. (See Romans, chapter 11).

It behooves all Believers to take what ever time is needed, prior to each Passover season, and make all of the connections between what happened to the children of Israel as they experienced their release from bondage and what happened to each one of us, as individuals, when we came out of our bondage to the Pharaoh of this world, *HaSatan* (the Adversary).

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## ~ The Jerusalem Passover ~

Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time.  
 On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight,  
 You shall keep it at its appointed time.  
 According to all its rites and ceremonies  
 You shall keep it.  
*Numbers 9:2-3*

The story of Passover\* does not end with the children of Israel coming out of Egypt. In fact, that was only the beginning. The ultimate fulfillment of this Festival season occurred some fifteen hundred years later in the city of Jerusalem, in the land of Judea, when a Jewish Rabbi was nailed to a stake and died. In reality, the Egyptian Passover (although a great event in itself) was a mere type and shadow of the Jerusalem Passover; an event that would have worldwide, rather than merely regional, significance.

To many people in Western society, the land of Israel seems like a far off and rather unimportant place. It is only about the size of the state of New Jersey. It has large amounts of desert and no appreciable natural resources and its inhabitants are constantly fighting with one another. So why all this fuss about Israel?

To those who know history, this little land is the focal point of all human endeavors, for this is where God chose to dwell with His Bride after bringing her out of the land of Egypt. Israel is the promised land. Here we find the

\* In most cases the word 'Passover' is being used in a generic sense, meaning the entire season from *Nisan 10*, when the lamb was chosen, through *Nisan 21*, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. When specific days are referenced, it will be done by date (i.e. 14th, 15th, etc.) or by name, such as "day of Passover," (14th) or "First Day of Unleavened Bread" (15th).

crossroads of the ancient world and the city of Jerusalem, which today is claimed as sacred by three major religions.

It was here, in the land of Canaan, that God raised up the nation of people that He married. They were His chosen people, despite all of their sins and weaknesses:

**"Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD [YHVH], 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD [YHVH]'" (Jer. 31:31-32)**

It was now time for a New Covenant (*Brit Chadasha*), one that would make provision for the fact that the Bride (the children of Israel), in her natural state, was not perfect like her Husband. This meant the *Brit Chadasha* would not only have to provide a way for the Bride's past sins to be completely forgiven and forgotten, it would also be necessary for a way to be made so that the Bride could eventually become totally perfect as well. Total perfection, not possible while the Bride is still dwelling in the house (earth) of her natural father (*HaSatan* = the Satan) in the betrothed state, will be required prior to the culmination of her wedding to the Messiah. The Jerusalem Passover makes provisions for these factors.

This is not to say the previous marriage contract (*Ketuvah*) was set aside, rather it was enhanced to make provisions for those areas where the Bride failed in fulfilling the first *Ketuvah*.

**"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the LORD [YHVH]: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'" (Jer. 31:33)**

~ ~ ~

## ~ Early Passover ~ ~ Observances ~

Now Josiah kept a Passover  
 To the LORD in Jerusalem,  
 And they slaughtered the Passover lambs  
 On the fourteenth day of the first month.  
*II Chronicles 35:1*

One year after the Exodus, the children of Israel celebrated the first anniversary of that great event. The previous year had been full of events, some great, some not so great. The major event had been the giving of the *Torah* at Mt. Sinai on the day that was to become the Festival of *Shavu'ot* (Shaw-voo'ot), commonly called Pentecost. It was here that God married the nation of Israel, moving them from a state of betrothal (their status since the cutting of the *Covenant Between the Parts*), into the fullness of marriage. They had

been 'stolen' from the house of Pharaoh, their wicked adoptive father, and taken to Mt. Sinai for the wedding ceremony. The *Torah* was the wedding contract, called a *Ketuvah* (Keh-too'-vah). It spelled out the conditions under which they were to live as husband and wife.

The marriage had its problems. First the Bride did not want to hear the voice of her Husband (God) at Mt. Sinai, but asked that *Moshe* (Moh-shay' = Moses) become a mediator between them. Then, while *Moshe* was up on the mountain receiving the *Ketuvah* document, along with further instructions about how the Bride was to behave, she committed spiritual adultery with the golden calf. Eventually the relationship was patched up and a replacement *Ketuvah* (keh-too'-vah) was written. The Bride (children of Israel) was then asked to contribute to the building of the *Mishkan* (Meesh'-kahn), the Tabernacle, where the Husband (God) would dwell and where they could meet together. The Bride proved herself worthy by contributing with great generosity to this project.

As spring rolled around and *Nisan 1* was approaching, the time came to set up and dedicate the brand new portable home, the *Mishkan*:

**"On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting."** (Ex. 40:2)

A series of sacrifices were offered by each of the twelve tribes and then came the Passover:

**"Now the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 'Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight [between the two evenings], you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.'**

**"So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover..."** (Num. 9:1-5)

Some of the people were ritually unclean and could not partake of the Passover, so provision was made for them to partake of it one month later, in the second month of the sacred year (Num. 9:6-14).

#### ~ Passover in the Promised Land ~

There is no record that Passover was observed during the remainder of the time the children of Israel wandered outside the promised land. The next recorded Passover took place thirty-nine years later, after they had entered the land. The striking thing about this Passover is that all of the males who had been born in the wilderness had to be circumcised before they could partake. Since no uncircumcised male could eat the Passover, it is believed they were not celebrating it during their wanderings in the desert.

**"...For no uncircumcised person shall eat it [Passover]."** (Ex. 12:48)

Thus, once the children of Israel arrived in the land of Canaan, it was necessary for a mass circumcision to take place so that the Passover could be celebrated.

**"So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt ... had been circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness on the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised."**

(Josh. 5:3-5)

**"So the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight [between the two evenings] on the plains of Jericho."**

(Josh. 5:10)

Many have wondered why the Israelites did not circumcise their children in the wilderness. Some have speculated that infection might have been a great danger, so it was postponed for the safety of the children. However, it seems to this writer that the real reason they did not circumcise was because the Bride had refused to go home with her Husband. This occurred when the ten spies brought back an evil report about the inhabitants of the land, and the children of Israel listened to them, rather than the good report from Joshua and Caleb. Because of this lack of faith (trust) they ceased taking upon themselves the mark of the original marriage covenant (circumcision), until the time came when the Bride was actually ready and willing to move into her new home (the land of promise). Thus, the Bride carried the reproach of faithlessness throughout her desert wanderings by not performing *Brit Mila* (Breet Mee-lah' = circumcision) on her newborn males.

**"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Joshua, 'This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal [rolling] to this day."** (Josh. 5:9)

#### ~ Hezekiah's Passover ~

The next recorded Passover occurred during the reign of the 'good king' Hezekiah, of the house of Judah. Scripture states that he:

**"...opened the doors of the house of the LORD [YHVH] and repaired them."** (II Chron. 29:3)

Apparently the Temple had actually been closed up and was not in use when Hezekiah came to power:

**"They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel."** (II Chron. 29:7)

Not only did Hezekiah have the Temple cleaned up, he also made sure that Passover was properly celebrated. He even went so far as to send letters of invitation to all Israel and Judah:

**"And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD [YHVH] at Jerusalem, to**

keep the Passover to the LORD [YHVH] God of Israel. For the king and his leaders and all the congregation in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. For they could not keep it at that time, because a sufficient number of priests had not sanctified themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem."

(II Chron. 30:1-3)

There were some other problems. Many of the people had not properly sanctified themselves so they were not allowed to perform the slaughter of the lambs at the Temple as was required by law. Therefore, the Levites slaughtered the lambs for the people who were unclean:

"For *there were many in the congregation who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD [YHVH].*"

(II Chron. 30:17)

However, these people then went ahead and ate the Passover lamb while still in their unclean state, which was also contrary to law:

"...yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. ..."

(II Chron. 30:18)

But our God is a merciful God. Having seen that the hearts of the people were right, and that the intercessory prayer of Hezekiah was offered up to the Throne of God on their behalf, God chose to overlook their uncleanness because of their zeal for Him:

"...But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good LORD [YHVH] provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD [YHVH] God of his father's, though *he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.*'"

"And the LORD [YHVH] listened to Hezekiah and healed the people."

(II Chron. 30:18-20)

#### ~ Passover Lambs Slain At the Temple ~

It is extremely important to pause here and take note of the fact that once the children of Israel had come into the promised land they then had to sacrifice their Passover lambs at a specific place designated by God. No longer could the Passover lambs be slaughtered at the homes of the individuals, rather the ritual slaying now had to be done at the Tabernacle or, later on, at the Temple in Jerusalem.

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD [YHVH] your God for in the month of Abib the LORD [YHVH] your God brought you out of Egypt by night. Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD [YHVH] your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD [YHVH] chooses to put His name. You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, *that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.* And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days,

nor shall *any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight [between the two evenings] remain overnight until morning.*

"You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; but at the place where the LORD [YHVH] your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight [between the two evenings], at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt.

"And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents."

(Deut. 16:1-7)

This is an extremely important passage relating to the observance of Passover and the slaying of the lamb. Some have claimed this passage does not refer to the Passover lamb but only to the secondary sacrifices offered in conjunction with this Festival season. The primary reason for this opinion is because of the Hebrew word *bashal* (bah-shah'), which here is translated 'roast,' while in other passages is translated as "to boil." It is the same word used in Ex. 12:9 where it is translated as 'sodden' or 'boiled,' and describes the way in which the Passover lamb is not to be cooked.

"Do not eat it raw, nor boiled (*bashal*) at all with water, but roasted in fire -- its head with its legs and its entrails."

(Ex. 12:9)

A check in the *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* p. 147, Strong's #1310; yields the answer concerning the word *bashal*:

"(1) to be cooked with fire, Ezek. 24:5.

"(2) ripened with the heat of the sun, as the harvest, Joel 4:13."

Basically the word means "to cook," and, like the English word, it includes various methods of cooking. The usage in Ex. 12:9 says specifically do not cook it in water, i.e. do not boil it. Deut. 16:7 just says to cook it and eat it, the manner of cooking is not prescribed since the method of cooking was established in Exodus 12. The children of Israel already knew the correct method of roasting the lamb on an upright pomegranate stake.

The second objection to the idea that this passage includes the Passover lamb, is because it says in verse 2; "**...you shall sacrifice the Passover ... from the flock and the herd...**" Notice it says that it comes from the "flock AND the herd," not "the flock OR the herd." The Passover lamb is always taken from the flock (sheep or goats) and never from the herd which includes cattle. The answer is quite simple. The Passover lamb is always from the flock. However, when the assembly of people is too large for everyone in the family group to be able to have more than a small portion from the Passover lamb, then a second animal is also offered so there will be sufficient meat for all. This secondary sacrifice is called the *chagigah* (khah'-gee-gah), and it could be from either the flock or the herd, and the leftovers could be kept overnight and eaten the next day.

All of the other parts of this Deuteronomy passage specifically point towards the Passover lamb itself, and say that it is not to be slaughtered at home.

~ Josiah's Passover ~

The next recorded Passover observance came during the reign of another 'good king' of the house of Judah, King Josiah. Josiah was only eight years old when he began his reign, which lasted thirty-one years. The country had just gone through seventy-seven years of 'evil kings' (Manasseh and Amon) during which time the country had completely degenerated into idolatry.

Josiah was sixteen years old when he began to seek God and when he was twenty years old he began to rid the country of its idols. At age twenty-six, Josiah initiated a program to repair the Temple. It was during this process that the *Torah* was found hidden away in the rubble. It was read to Josiah the king, who tore his clothes in despair realizing how badly the nation of Judah had drifted from God. Josiah then made a covenant with God:

"...to follow the LORD [YHVH], and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book." (II Chron. 34:31)

**"Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD [YHVH] in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month."** (II Chron. 35:1)

The Priests and Levites were all set in order to do service at the Temple in their respective positions. Then Josiah gave them their instructions concerning Passover:

"**And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the lay people, and according to the division of the father's house of the Levites. So slaughter the Passover offerings, [note the added word] sanctify yourselves, and prepare them for your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD [YHVH] by the hand of Moses.'**

"**Then Josiah gave the lay people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover offerings for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand cattle; these were from the king's possessions. ...**

**"Also they roasted [bashal] the Passover offerings; [note the added word] with fire according to the ordinance; but the other holy offerings they boiled [bashal] in pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and divided them quickly among all the lay people."** (II Chron. 35:5-7, 13)

Please notice the first usage of the word *bashal* is in the context of cooking with fire. The second time it is translated as 'boiled' because the object in which they were to be cooked were 'pots.' Obviously you do not 'roast' in a pot, or 'boil' in fire. The lambs were 'roasted' with fire, while the herd animals were boiled.

This Passover included much singing (v.15) and celebration:

**"There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet..."** (II Chron. 35:18)

~ The Passover of Ezra ~

The last of the Passovers, mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, was held at the completion of the second Temple in the days of Ezra:

**"And the descendants of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean. And they slaughtered the Passover lambs for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.**

**"Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD [YHVH] God of Israel. And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the LORD [YHVH] made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."**

(Ezra 6:19-22)

It must be remembered that some of the Jews who had been among the original captives actually returned to Jerusalem seventy years later, for it is said that those who had seen the glorious Temple of Solomon wept when they saw the new Temple for it was very modest.

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~ Second Temple ~  
~ Passover Observance ~

Many people shall come and say,  
"Come, and let us go up  
To the mountain of the LORD,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
He will teach us His ways,  
And we shall walk in His paths."  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
*Isaiah 2:3*

**D**uring the time that the children of Israel were in captivity in Babylon, a number of changes took place in their approach toward YHVH their God and the *Torah*. Before the captivity there were long periods of idolatry, even to the point where some Israelites sacrificed their children to the god *Molech*. Therefore, in order to preserve their religion and culture, the Jews in Babylon became very strict in their approach to keeping the obligations of the *Torah*. They understood that they had been sent into captivity because they: (1) did not keep the Sabbath holy (set apart), (2) fell into various forms of idolatry, (3) did not care for the poor among them, and (4) did not teach *Torah* to the people. Of course

there were other reasons as well, but these constituted their primary offenses.

When the house of Judah went into captivity, many people were left in the homeland; only the upper classes were actually deported to Babylon. As a result, Babylon became a center of Jewish learning until well after the time of *Y'shua*. In fact, in *Y'shua's* day there were more Jews in Babylon than in Jerusalem, and there continued to be Jewish scholars and rabbis studying and teaching in Babylon as late as 500 C.E.

So, when the remnant returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls and the Temple, they found that a good number of Jews were still living in the land. These people became known as the *am-ha'aretz* (ahm-ha' ah-retz') the people of the land. They were largely uneducated and poor, and they became dependent upon the teachers in the newly formed synagogues for their understanding of *Torah*.

Ezra is credited with reshaping Jewish thought and worship after the return from exile. It was during this period that the *Sanhedrin* (the Supreme Court of Judah) was formed. It was originally called the Great Assembly and was organized in a manner similar to the seventy elders of Israel who functioned in *Moshe's* day. It was the responsibility of the Great Assembly to provide proper judgments and interpretations of the scriptures. They did not have authority to write new scripture or to rewrite existing scripture, only to interpret it. New laws could only be written if they were not contrary to scripture. This was just like it is today, where new laws can be written as long as they are within the confines of the Constitution.

It was during Ezra's time when the Scriptures that we know today as the Old Testament were first gathered into a codified form, although there would not be a final rendering of these scriptures until after the fall of the second Temple.

Ezra is usually credited with having begun the synagogue concept. Originally synagogues were considered to be houses of study, since worship was always conducted at the Temple in the form of sacrifices and prayers. However, the synagogue quickly became the center of Jewish life in the smaller communities. No longer would the Jewish people have to perish for lack of knowledge. It is interesting to note that there was actually a synagogue within the Temple itself, so the synagogue influence was felt even there. Archeologists have uncovered numerous ancient synagogues throughout the land of Israel, including one in Capernaum where *Y'shua* Himself may have taught.

As time progressed, Jews began to divide into various sects. The main ones were the Sadducees (made up primarily of priests and Levites) and the Pharisees (who were the rabbis that controlled and taught in the synagogues). Other sects included the Essenes, the Zealots, the Boathusians and the Sacarii (a group of professional assassins within the Zealots). The *am-ha'aretz* (people of the land) usually did not belong to any particular sect but tended to follow the Pharisees because of their regular synagogue attendance in the outlying communities which the Pharisees ran. Like today, the main concern of the *am-ha'aretz* was just making a living.

During this period of time, Passover became the pilgrimage Festival of choice among the Jews living in the Diaspora. While there were actually three pilgrimage festivals; Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, it was generally agreed

that more people came to Jerusalem for Passover than for the other two. The reason for this probably being the rich symbolism of religious freedom, expressed in the story of the Exodus, which was recounted at that time of year.

### ~ Going Up to Jerusalem ~

As Passover approached, the observant Jews and their families (if they could afford it) would begin coming to Jerusalem. Whenever a Jew made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem it was said that he was 'going up.' The word in Hebrew is *aliyah* (ah-lee-ah') and is used today to describe a Jew moving to Israel. Anciently this term was used because Jerusalem and the Temple are on the top of a series of mountains. It does not matter from which direction one comes, it is necessary to 'go up' in order to reach the Temple.

As the pilgrims moved toward the city (their numbers swelling), they would sing the fifteen Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120 through 134), corresponding to the fifteen steps that led from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Israelites on the Temple grounds. What a magnificent sight and sound it must have been. Thousands of pilgrims singing as they went up to Jerusalem to worship God as they were instructed to do by the *Torah*.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem they would have to be ritually cleansed before they could enter the Temple grounds. This was accomplished by their being immersed (baptized) in one of the many immersion pools (singular = *mikvah*; plural = *mikvaot*) that had been constructed outside the south wall of the Temple Mount. It was also necessary that each participant be ritually pure in order to partake of the Passover lamb.

Meanwhile, the shepherds were arriving with the flocks of sheep and goats that had been born and raised near Bethlehem by the Levitical shepherds. After the dusty trip the flocks would be washed in the waters that ran through the *Kidron* valley which ran along the eastern side of the Temple Mount.

It is said that as the number of pilgrims grew over the years, it became necessary to extend the boundaries of the city of Jerusalem so that all the pilgrims could eat the Passover within the defined city limits. In *Y'shua's* day this boundary had been extended to include the nearby town of Bethpage, but not quite as far away as Bethany where *Y'shua* stayed at the home of Simon the leper.

### ~ The Slaying of the Lambs ~

On the tenth day of *Nisan* the pilgrims would purchase their Passover lambs. The lambs would remain with the new owners until the fourteenth day of *Nisan* when the slaughtering of the lambs took place at the Temple. Then, on the afternoon of *Nisan 14* the ritual slaughtering of the Passover lambs at the Temple took place. It must have been quite a spectacle. Thousands of people would line up in the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women with their lambs. Usually three men would come with each lamb. Imagine the sights, the sounds, and the smells that must have permeated the entire city.

The regular evening sacrifices were offered early on Passover day, *Nisan 14*, so there would be sufficient time to slaughter all of the Passover lambs before sundown. Thus it

was that at about the ninth hour (three p.m. our time) the High Priest would slay the first Passover lamb which was designated as being for the entire nation of Israel. As he drew the knife across the throat of the lamb he would say: "It is finished." Following this ritual slaughter, the assembled priests would line up. All twenty-four courses of the priests were on duty for this event. This meant that all of the priests in the country, who were of proper age and were ritually clean, assisted in this ceremony.

The gigantic *Nicanor* Gates that separated the Court of the Women from the Court of Israel were opened and the first division of pilgrims were admitted. When the Court of Israel became full, the gates were closed. Several large groups of Priests stood in two rows each. The pilgrims would step up to one of the Priests. The person making the offering would draw the sharp knife across the throat of the lamb. Then the Priest would catch the blood in a silver or gold basin (both were used). Immediately the bowl was passed to the Priest in the row directly behind him, and from there it was passed from hand to hand until it reached the altar where the blood was thrown onto the base of the altar. The bowl was then passed back along another line for reuse. This allowed for many lambs to be slain simultaneously, as the double rows of Priests were quite long and there were multiple double rows.

Immediately after the lamb had been slain, the one offering the animal would step back out of the way so that the next group could bring their sacrifice. Because of the great number of lambs, most men came in groups of three. The men would tie the slain lamb to a pole which was then suspended between the shoulders of two of the men, while the third man would proceed to skin the animal. The skins were given to the Priests as payment for their participation in the offering. Next, the gutting process took place and the parts that were to be burned on the altar were given to the priest designated for that duty.

Meanwhile, the Levitical Choir would be singing the *Hallel*, (Psalms 113-118), and when they got to the end they would start over. It is said they were never able to complete the third singing of the *Hallel* before the division was finished with their sacrifices. At this point the *Nicanor* Gates were again opened, the first division left, the second division entered, and the entire process was repeated. The third division was always quite small in comparison to the first two. In this manner all of the lambs were slaughtered at the Temple for the thousands of Passover meals which were to follow after sundown.

The Passover lamb was then taken to the place, which the pilgrims had secured beforehand, and there it was roasted according to law and served as part of the meal in an extensive ritual called the *Seder* (Say'-der = set order). Since it was spring and the weather was generally warm, many of the pilgrims held their family *Seder* in places called 'upper rooms.' These were actually housetops that were made private by surrounding them with latticework. It was required by local law that the residents of Jerusalem make available as much room in their home as possible for the pilgrims to use during this Festival.

The Passover lambs had to be slain at the Temple and roasted and consumed within the city limits of Jerusalem. If a family was unable to come to Jerusalem they were allowed to

hold a Passover *Seder* in their home, even in the Diaspora. However, they could not have lamb as a part of their meal. This is still true today. Lamb is never served at a Jewish Passover *Seder* since there is no Temple where it can be legally sacrificed. Although other kinds of red meat would be perfectly legal to serve, most Jews will serve chicken or fish so there can be no question that the meat being served might be lamb.

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## ~ The Passover Seder ~

Then He said to them,  
"With *ferve*nt desire I have desired  
To eat this Passover with you before I suffer;  
For I say to you,  
I will no longer eat of it  
Until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."  
*Luke 22:15-16*



The modern Jewish *Seder* is somewhat different than what is believed to have taken place in the first century. However, most historians agree that the basic elements of the *Seder* were in place at that time, it having merely received embellishment during the intervening years.

The *Seder* is divided into fifteen steps or degrees, corresponding to the fifteen steps between the Court of the Women and the Court of Israel and to the fifteen Psalms or Songs of Ascent which the Levitical Choir sang as they ascended these steps, moving upward toward God. Similarly, as the *Seder* progresses, the participants are ascending a spiritual ladder which brings them ever closer to God. Since man cannot physically ascend all the way into heaven and into God's immediate presence, it is said that as one nears the end of the *Seder* (if their heart is right with God) God will descend to meet them at the level they have attained.

### ~ The Fifteen Steps ~

Prior to the beginning of the *Seder* two or more Festival candles are lit. (This is also done just prior to the beginning of the weekly Sabbath.) It is customary for the woman of the house to light the candles, after which she recites the following blessing:\* "Blessed art Thou, O LORD our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by His commandments, and has commanded us to set apart this Holy Day."

- ◆ (1) *Kaddish* (*Kahd-deesh'*) - The first cup of wine opens the *Seder* service. This cup is know as *The Cup*

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\* In Jewish understanding almost every action includes a blessing of God prior to the action that is to take place. For example, one does not bless the food before beginning a meal, rather one blesses God who gave the food. Following the meal one says *Grace After the Meal* which involves giving thanks to God for providing the blessing of sustenance. (See Deut. 8:10). Every blessing is begun in the same manner with the words, "Blessed art Thou, O LORD our God, King (or Ruler) of the universe who..." Such blessings are called, in Hebrew, *Brachah* (Brah-khah) which merely means 'blessing.'



of *Sanctification*. A traditional blessing is said after which everyone leans to the left and drinks the wine.\*\* At the 'Last Supper' this was the cup taken before dinner; **"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'**" (Luke 22:17-18)

- ◆ (2) *Ur'chatz* (Oor' khahtz) - A washbasin is brought out and each participant washes their hands.
- ◆ (3) *Karpas* (Kahr-pahs') - A *Brachah* is said and then a piece of *Karpas* (parsley) is dipped in saltwater and eaten. The *Karpas* represents the hyssop which was used to apply the blood to the doorposts and lintel, while the saltwater represents the tears of the children of Israel as they endured their slavery in Egypt.
- ◆ (4) *Yachatz* (Yah-khahtz') - Three *Matzot* have been previously placed in a linen bag with three compartments. The middle *matzah* is removed and broken in half. One half of the broken *matzah* is then replaced in the linen bag. The other half is wrapped in a separate linen cloth and hidden. It is called the *afikomen* and will become most important later in the service.
- ◆ (5) *Maggid* (Mahg-geed') - Now comes a lengthy part of the *Seder* where the story of the Exodus from Egypt is told. This is to fulfill the scripture found in Ex. 13:8 where God instructed the children of Israel to tell their children what this night is all about.
  - *Ha Lachma Anya* (Hah Lakh-mah' Ahn-yah') - The cups are refilled with wine. Then a *Brachah* is said for the *Matzot*. Here the *Matzot* is referred to as 'the bread of affliction.'
  - *Mah Nish'tanah* (Mah Neesh'tah-nah') - The Four Questions. It is tradition for one of the children to ask four questions that pertain to this night and what it means. The leader (usually the father) responds with a lengthy teaching. Much symbolism is included in this section.
  - *The Four Sons* - The leader talks about the four kinds of sons; a wise son, a wicked son, a simple son and one who does not know how to ask.
  - *The Plagues* - A ceremony is performed where each of the ten plagues of Egypt is named. As the name is said each participant dips his finger into the cup of wine and drops a single drop of the blood red wine onto the plate. This cup of wine is called *The Cup of Affliction*.
  - *Dayeinu* (Dah-yaa'-new) - Literally; "It is enough." A responsive reading concerning the

many blessings that God performed for the children of Israel as He brought them out of slavery.

- *The Seder Plate* - Three items on the *Seder* plate are discussed and their meaning given; the *Pesach* (Passover) sacrifice (symbolized by the shank bone of a lamb), *Matzah* and *Maror* (see below).
- *Hallel* (Hah-lehl') - The first two Psalms (113 and 114) comprising the *Hallel* (Praise) are recited or sung.
- *The Cup of Affliction* - The second of the four cups of wine is consumed at this point. In Jewish terms this cup represents the affliction suffered by the children of Israel in Egypt. To Believers it represents the affliction that *Y'shua* was to suffer the very next day.
- ◆ (6) *Rachtzah* (Rahkh-tzah') - The washbasin is brought out again and all participants wash their hands. It is this writer's opinion that this was the place where *Y'shua* took the basin and began to wash the disciples feet.
- ◆ (7) *Motzi* (Moh'-tzee) - The three *Matzot* are removed from the bag and, with the broken one remaining in the middle, a *Brachah* is said.
- ◆ (8) *Matzah* (Mah-tzah') - Another *Brachah* is said, then the two whole *Matzot* are broken and distributed to the celebrants and eaten. The broken piece of the middle *Matzah* is laid aside for future use.
- ◆ (9) *Maror* (Mah-roar') - These are the Bitter Herbs which are commanded to be eaten at Passover. (Ex. 12:8). A piece of lettuce is given to each person, it is dipped into horseradish and eaten. This is a symbol of the bitterness felt by the children of Israel as they suffered in Egypt.
- ◆ (10) *Korech* (Koh-rehkh') - The third *Matzah* is now broken and dipped in the *Maror* (horseradish) and then dipped in the *Charoset* (a mixture of chopped apples and nuts). The entire piece is then eaten. It is our opinion that this is the famous sop which *Y'shua* dipped with His betrayer Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.
- ◆ (11) *Shulchan Orech* (Shool-khan' Oh-rehch') - The rest of the meal is now eaten.
- ◆ (12) *Tzafun* (Tzah-foon') - This word means "the hidden one." It refers to the *afikomen*, the *Matzah* that was broken, wrapped in a linen cloth and hidden. A game is usually played with the children where they search for the *Tzafun*. The one finding it is given a redemption price by the leader. The *Seder* cannot proceed until the *afikomen* (the hidden one) is redeemed. The leader then takes the *afikomen*, breaks it in pieces giving a portion to each person present. According to Jewish tradition the *afikomen* represents the Passover lamb (which can no longer be served) and it also represents the Messiah. It is our opinion

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\*\* In *Y'shua's* day it was tradition to partake of the *Seder* in a reclining position, leaning to the left on a large pillow. This was a symbol of freedom because that is the manner in which free men ate their meals, while the servants had to eat standing so as to be ever ready to serve their masters. Today it is customary to lean to the left when drinking the wine in order to recall that reclining position of free men.

this is where *Y'shua* gave the new symbolism, "**And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'**" (Luke 22:19) This is the last bit of food that may be eaten on this night. Following the eating of the *afikomen* the washbasin is again brought and everyone washes their hands once again to conclude the meal. This is also a possible place for the washing of the feet to have taken place.

- ◆ (13) *Birchat Hamazon* (Beer-khat' Hah-mah-zohn') - Grace After the Meal. The wine cup is filled for the third time. Psalm 126 is sung and then *Birchat Hamazon* is recited. Following *Birchat Hamazon* another *Brachah* is said and the third cup of wine is consumed. This cup is called *The Cup of Redemption*. It is the opinion of this writer that this is the cup which *Y'shua* took and said; "**Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'**" (Luke 22:20)
- ◆ (14) *Hallel* (Hah-lehl') - The fourth cup of wine is poured for each participant and one additional cup of wine is now poured at the empty place setting which has been set for Elijah. This is a tradition based on the scripture in Malachi which says Elijah must come before the Messiah. This additional cup is called *The Cup of Elijah*. After this ceremony the remaining *Hallel* Psalms are sung. These include Psalms 115 through 118, concluding with *The Great Hallel*, Psalm 136. (*Hallel* means 'praise' in Hebrew.) Another *Brachah* is said for this fourth cup of wine which is called *The Cup of Restoration* or *The Cup of His Coming*, which is then consumed. This cup looks forward to the return of *Y'shua* as King of kings and Lord of lords. (This cup was probably not a part of the Last Supper *Seder*.)
- ◆ (15) *Nirtzah* (Neer-tzah') - All is Accepted. The *Seder* (order) of *Pesach* (Passover) is now complete. If the *Seder* has been conducted with a pure heart and a believing mind, then God will indeed have come down to meet each participant and touch his or her heart with the joy of His Salvation. Most Jews will end the ceremony by saying; "*L'shanah ha ba-a Yirushalayim*" which translated is: "Next year in Jerusalem."

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## ~ The Last Supper ~

When the hour had come,  
He sat down,  
And the twelve apostles with Him.  
*Luke 22:14*



Now we come to the 'Last Supper' that our Saviour *Y'shua HaMashiach* ate with his disciples the night in which He was betrayed. Was it a Passover *Seder*? Was it a new ceremony that had no relationship to the traditional Passover *Seder*? Or was it changed from the traditional Passover to a 'Christian Passover?' These are legitimate questions that have plagued Believers for almost two thousand years, yet there are strong hints within the Scriptures which indicate just exactly what it was. What follows is our opinion based on the Scriptures and upon what is currently known about the customs of that time and place.

~ When Was the Last Supper Held? ~

The first question that must be answered is, on which night was the Last Supper held?

Most Believers agree that the Last Supper was held on the night portion of *Nisan 14*. (Remember that Hebrew days always begin at sunset, not at midnight.) A small number of Believers hold to the Last Supper being held on the night portion of *Nisan 15*, when the Jews would have been eating their Passover lambs. The answer to this question is found in the gospel of John. Notice which day it was when *Y'shua* was brought to trial:

**"Then they led Jesus [*Y'shua*] from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover."** (John 18:28)

The Passover lambs were slain at the Temple on the afternoon of *Nisan 14* and were eaten after sundown which is the night portion of *Nisan 15*. Thus, if the Jews were afraid of going into the Praetorium lest they become ritually defiled and thereby be unable to eat the Passover, it stands to reason that this event must have taken place prior to *Nisan 15*.

By that afternoon, *Y'shua* was hanging on the stake along with two malefactors. The Jews wanted the victims to die and have their bodies removed prior to sunset.

**"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."** (John 19:31)

The only possible 'high day' at this time was the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which always falls on *Nisan 15*. Therefore, the day *Y'shua* died on the stake had to be *Nisan 14*, the Passover Day, the very same day and hour when the Passover lambs were being slain at the Temple:

**"...For indeed Christ [Messiah], our Passover, was sacrificed for us."** (I Cor. 5:7)

**"The next day John saw Jesus [Y'shua] coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"** (John 1:29)

**"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"** (Rev. 5:12)

Indeed, *Y'shua* is our Passover lamb, and He was slain at exactly the same time (the ninth hour = three p.m.) when the High Priest sacrificed the first Passover lamb for the entire nation of Israel. It is profoundly interesting to note that as the High Priest drew the knife across the throat of the lamb he was required to make a statement. This statement is exactly the same one that *Y'shua* made on the stake:

**"So when Jesus [Y'shua] had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."** (John 19:30)

Some have speculated that the year in which *Y'shua* was crucified the Jews were unable to sacrifice the Passover lambs because of the three hours of darkness, the earthquake, and the rending of the Temple veil. While this is a distinct possibility, there are no historical records to indicate that such was the case.

### ~ Was The Last Supper A Seder? ~

The next question that arises is whether the Last Supper was a Passover *Seder* or just a last night get together before *Y'shua* went away. All indications are that it was indeed a Passover *Seder*.

How can we know this?

(1) It is called a Passover:

**"Now on the first day [note added word] of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus [Y'shua], saying to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?'"**

**"And He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, 'My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"**

**"So the disciples did as Jesus [Y'shua] had directed them; and they prepared the Passover."** (Matt. 26:17-19)

**"And His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover."** (Mark 14:16)

**"So they went and found it as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover."** (Luke 22:13)

**"Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'" (Luke 22:15)**

(2) The meal was eaten in Jerusalem. Prior to this night, *Y'shua* had been making the two mile journey back to *Bethany* every night, where He was staying in the home of Simon the leper. However, the Passover lamb had to be consumed within the city limits of Jerusalem, therefore the lamb could not legally have been taken back to *Bethany* for the *Seder*. While one could hold a *Seder* in *Bethany*, the Passover lamb could not have been served there. This seems to indicate that a properly sacrificed Passover lamb was served at the Last Supper:

**"After two days it was the Passover ... And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper..."** (Mark 14:1, 3)

There is no way to prove one way or the other whether the Simon of *Bethany* was also the father of Judas the betrayer, but it is interesting to note that we are given the name of the father of Judas Iscariot:

**"He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve."** (John 6:71)

(3) The meal was eaten in the evening. The customary time for the last meal of the day was before it became dark. Only on the Sabbath and the Festivals did the Jews eat after dark.

**"In the evening He came with the twelve."** (Mark 14:17)

(4) They reclined while eating the meal.

**"And when the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him."** (Luke 22:14)

While the other gospel accounts use the usual Greek term which means to sit down and eat a meal, Luke uses a different Greek word; *anapipto* (Strong's #377) which means; "to fall back, i.e. lie down, lean back."

Only at the Passover *Seder* did the Jews sit in a reclining position. This was the manner of the rich and powerful, those who were free men and citizens of Rome. On this night the Jews considered themselves to be free men, even though their nation was subject to the Roman Emperor.

(5) Wine was served at the Last Supper. Only on Sabbath (if they could afford it) and on Festivals did the Jews drink wine with their meals.

Also, it was not customary to recite an additional *Brachah* if a second or third cup of wine was poured during the course of a normal Sabbath or Festival meal. This was only done at the Passover *Seder*:

**"Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. ...'"** (Mark 14:23-24)

This is the same cup as is mentioned in Luke 22:

**"Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'" (Luke 22:20)**

This is definitely not the same cup over which *Y'shua* said a *Brachah* at the beginning of the meal. (See Luke 22:17 below.)

(6) The normal way to begin a meal in a Jewish setting is to say the *Brachah* (blessing) for the wine and then the *Brachah* for the bread. Only at the Passover *Seder* is the blessing said only for the wine at the outset of the meal:

**"And when the hour had come, He sat down ... Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, ..."** (Luke 22:14, 17)

The *Brachah* for the bread comes later in the Passover ceremony.

(7) While dipping of food was common in a normal Jewish meal, it was not required. However, dipping of food is of prime importance in the Passover *Seder* because it is done, not just once but, twice. This forms the basis for one of the four questions that is asked by the son: "On all other nights we are not required to dip even once, but on this night we dip twice?"

Some very interesting things can be learned by knowing the *Seder* customs and applying them to the dipping incident. It was customary for the leader of the *Seder* to be seated at the table with people both to his right and to his left. It was customary for the eldest to sit to the left of the leader and the youngest to his right. When it came time to dip the food, the leader would share that honor with the eldest person who sat to his left. Since *Y'shua* dipped the sop with Judas, it can be safely assumed that Judas was the oldest of the twelve. Perhaps that is why he was entrusted with the money bag.

On the other hand, when they reclined at the Passover meal they always reclined to the left. This meant that the person sitting to *Y'shua's* right would have his head near *Y'shua's* bosom. Since John finds himself in this position it can safely be assumed that John was the youngest of the disciples. Peter was probably sitting across the table from John and, in the din of the general conversation, was able to quietly ask John to ask *Y'shua* who the betrayer was. *Y'shua* was also able to answer quietly to John so that probably only Peter and John actually knew who *Y'shua* had fingered.

(8) The Passover *Seder* is always ended with the singing of the Great *Hallel*, Psalm 136:

**"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."** (Matt. 26:30)

According to Jewish law all participants in the Passover were required to stay within the city limits of Jerusalem for the entire night. Normally, *Gethsemane* would be considered outside the city, as it was across the *Kidron* Valley, part way up the Mount of Olives to the east. However, during the Passover season the city limits were extended to include the western side of the Mount of Olives so that *Gethsemane* would be considered a part of the city of Jerusalem. Again we see *Y'shua* being very observant of all the Jewish laws and customs.

~ A Legitimate Passover? ~

A question that has bothered almost every Believer is; how could *Y'shua* and His disciples hold a legitimate Passover *Seder* one night before the traditional Jewish one?

The Passover lambs were killed *ben ha arva'im* (ben hah ar-vah-eem'), which is usually translated as 'evening' or 'twilight' but literally means "between the two evenings."

The Jewish sages have always understood this phrase to mean the time of day that lies between when the sun first begins its decline (early afternoon to us) and when the sun is in rapid decline (late afternoon to us). Thus, "between the two evenings" is said to be mid-afternoon. This would put it at about the ninth hour (approximately three p.m.).

There are two keys to a correct interpretation of this phrase. The first lies in the example of *Y'shua's* death on the stake. He died at the precise time of day which the Jews interpreted to be "between the two evenings;" of this there can be no doubt:

**"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus [*Y'shua*] had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.' And having said this, He breathed His last."**

(Luke 23:44-46)

Just as the High Priest was about to slay the Passover lamb which was symbolic for the entire nation of Israel, the real Passover Lamb died in its place on the stake. What a powerful testimony for the correctness of what the Jews were doing all of those centuries.

The second key to the meaning of *ben ha arva'im* (between the two evenings) is found in the scriptures. Chapter 28 of Numbers deals with the daily sacrifices that were to be offered at the Temple. An offering was made in the 'morning' and another in the 'evening:'

**"The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening..."** (Num. 28:3)

Again, the word 'evening' is *ben ha arva'im* which literally translated is "between the two evenings." The 'evening' sacrifices were offered every afternoon beginning at the ninth hour (about three p.m.). For centuries it was done this way, and *Y'shua* never once in His entire ministry condemned that practice. He had a lot to say about how the leaders of both the Sadducees (Priests and Levites) and the Pharisees (Synagogue teachers) led their private lives and treated other people, but He never once condemned either Temple or Synagogue worship:

**"Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ [*Messiah*]."** (Col. 2:16-17)

The sacrifice of Messiah is the most important factor of the entire Passover season. Never forget that great truth. Whatever you do, do it in complete faith:

**"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."** (Rom. 14:22-23)

**"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

**"Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault..."**  
(Col. 2:12-15a)

After twenty plus years of conditioning, it was very difficult for this writer to move away from a *Nisan 14* observance of communion into the fullness of a complete Passover *Seder* on the 15th, as was celebrated since Egypt by the children of Israel. However, the experience has proved to be so much richer and fuller than communion could ever be, and as a result new understanding has been revealed. (New to this writer, that is. The information has always been there, but often times we ignore or overlook it because of our unwillingness to grow in grace and knowledge.)

If the Passover *Seder* was not normally held on *Nisan 14* then the original question must again be asked: How could *Y'shua* and His disciples keep a legitimate Passover *Seder* on *Nisan 14*? After all, *Y'shua* never sinned, He kept the law perfectly.

**"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

(II Cor. 5:21)

#### ~ Impending Death Theory ~

It is believed there was a practice in Temple worship, that allowed a person who was on the brink of death to hold a Passover *Seder*, complete with lamb, at anytime during the year. Certain conditions had to be met:

- ◆ They had to know they were going to die before the next Passover, or second Passover.
- ◆ They had to be within the city limits of Jerusalem.
- ◆ They had to have the premises free from all leavening, just like at the normal Passover meal.
- ◆ They had to have an assemblage of at least ten people who were ritually clean and able to partake of the Passover.
- ◆ They had to be physically able to eat a piece of lamb the size of an olive.

*Y'shua* met all of these requirements, including the first.

**"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus [*Y'shua*] knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."**

(John 13:1)

**"You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."**

(Matt. 26:2)

Notice that John mentions the Last Supper was being held "before the feast of the Passover," that is, before the regular

time for the Passover meal, *Nisan 15*. This is another proof that the Last Supper was held one night early.

Two hundred years later a great argument broke out among the Jewish sages as to whether the Passover could be legally kept on the night of *Nisan 14*, the assumption being that it could be kept at any other time of the year. Some argued that the only night it could not be kept was *Nisan 14*. Since this became a point of argument, it can be assumed that there were others who argued that it was permissible to do so.

The essence of the argument is found in a set of books called the *Tosefta* (Toe-sehf'-tah). *Tosefta* means 'additions' in Hebrew. The *Tosefta* contains those writings of the Oral *Torah* which did not make it into the *Mishnah* (Meesh-nah).

One must be trained to truly be able to read any of the ancient Jewish books correctly. Basically they are law books and need to be approached with that in mind. Just as attorneys must be trained in the reading of our national, state and local laws, so a similar type of training is required to properly read the Jewish law books. We do not claim to have that training. However, after having studied this topic for several years, and having studied the *Tosefta* and *Mishnah* passages for several years, some things have become evident. If a Jewish writer presents an argument against something it means that someone else has argued for it, even though the other side may not be explicitly stated, otherwise the issue would not have been raised. Thus, by arguing against a slaughtering of the Passover lamb on *Nisan 13*, and its consumption on *Nisan 14*, they automatically indicate that at one time it was permissible to do so under the special circumstances of imminent death.

Why would some of the Jews argue against a *Nisan 14* Passover *Seder*? Because they knew that is when *Y'shua* held His last Passover *Seder* and they wanted the non-believing Jews to think that it was against Jewish law to do so, and thereby discredit Him before the people.

It is our opinion that what *Y'shua* did on that evening of *Nisan 14*, was to exercise His legitimate right, under Jewish law, to hold a Passover *Seder* one night early, because He knew He was going to die the very next day as the ultimate Passover sacrifice for all the world. Three of the disciples took a chosen Passover lamb to the Temple and there performed the sacrifice according to Jewish law. Since the Passover sacrifice of the lamb is identical in every way to the Peace Offering, it was not unusual for people to appear on any day of the week with lambs for sacrifice. They were required to declare, prior to the sacrifice, what the sacrifice was for, whether a Peace Offering or a Passover Sacrifice. The Priests were obliged to perform the rite, assuming that the people were ritually clean and knew what they were doing. No Jew would ever consider bringing an improper offering to the Temple or to appear there in an unclean state. That would have been unthinkable and they might have expected to be struck dead on the spot if they did so.

#### ~ Teaching Seder Theory ~

Another opinion concerning the legitimacy of a Last Supper *Seder* involves the practice of Rabbis performing "teaching *Seders*" prior to the traditional *Nisan 15 Seder*.

According to this theory, it was common for these "teaching *Seders*" to be held for the purpose of helping the pilgrims learn what was going to take place, what the symbols meant, and how they were to conduct themselves. Since many Jews from the Diaspora might only come to Jerusalem and the Temple one time in their entire life (usually at Passover), it was important that they be ritually clean and know what was going on.

If this were the case with the Last Supper, then a Passover lamb would not have been sacrificed. This idea has some credence since *Y'shua* brought forth the new symbols of the bread being His body, and the wine being His blood, sacrificed for His disciples. In effect, *Y'shua* was 'teaching' His disciples about what the two most important *Seder* symbols meant in terms of the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Khah-dah-shah' = New Covenant).

### ~ The Wrong Day Theory ~

A very prevalent view in the Churches of God is that the correct time for the celebration of the Passover *Seder* always was at the beginning of *Nisan 14* and that 'the Jews' changed the date without telling anyone they had done so. However, this would not be consistent with Jewish practice, since they are very good at recording all of their various disputes. Since no record exists concerning this particular dispute it is unlikely that it ever occurred.

Support for a *Nisan 14* Passover observance seems to be forthcoming from the fact that in Israel today there are a small group of native people who actually sacrifice Passover lambs just after sundown on *Nisan 13* and consume them in a ceremonial meal that night (the beginning of *Nisan 14*). These people are descendants of the ancient Samaritans who lived between *Judea* and the *Galil* (Galilee region) in the days of *Y'shua*.

Before rushing to embrace the Samaritan practice one should ask a few questions. From whence came the religion of these people? What did *Y'shua* have to say about their religious practices?

The origins of the Samaritan religion goes back to the days when the northern ten tribes, the house of Israel, were taken captive by the nation of Assyria in 722 BCE. Huge numbers of the population were transported to Assyria. A remnant of the people escaped to the southern kingdom, the house of Judah. A few others probably remained hidden in the land. The Assyrian king then transported other ethnic groups, that he had captured, from their homelands into the area vacated by the house of Israel. They were a mixture of people and were pagan in their religious practice. They had a problem with wild animals coming into their villages, so they asked the king of Assyria to send them a priest from the house of Israel who could teach them the religion of the land so they would be protected from the wild animals. This he did. (See II Kings 17 for the complete story.)

The Samaritan religion was thus an amalgamation of the idolatry practiced by the house of Israel, the Samaritan's former pagan practices in their previous land, and what they learned from the *Torah*. They actually accepted the *Torah* as their Bible, but did not accept the other books of the Hebrew

Scriptures. In this respect they were in agreement with the Sadducees.

The Samaritans actually built a Temple on Mount Gerezim, which was an exact replica of the Temple in Jerusalem. This was done after the High Priest of God's Temple in Jerusalem decided to marry the daughter of the king of Samaria. Since the *Torah* required the wives of the Priests to also be from the line of *Aaron*, this disqualified the man from holding the office. The King of Samaria then built a Temple on Mount Gerezim in Samaria and his new Levitical son-in-law became the High Priest of Samaria. The Samaritan Temple was destroyed by the Maccabees when they conquered Samaria about 150 years before the time of *Y'shua*. Recent archaeological excavations have uncovered the foundation of this Temple.

Should we follow the practice of the Samaritans? Read what *Y'shua HaMashiach* had to say to the Samaritan woman at the well and then decide for yourself:

**""You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.""** (John 4:22)

It is interesting to note that *Y'shua* did not support the worship of the Samaritans and yet used the example of the 'Good Samaritan' as how to show love to your neighbor. By the same token, *Y'shua* supported the religion of the Jews (both Temple and Synagogue) but condemned the hardness of their hearts and their unwillingness to look after those in need.

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## ~ Passover Preparation ~

Let the children of Israel  
Keep the Passover at its appointed time.  
*Numbers 9:2*

**I**f the Passover lamb was sacrificed on the afternoon of *Nisan 14* and consumed after sundown on *Nisan 15*, the Holyday, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, why was *Nisan 14* called, in scripture, the Passover?

**""These are the feasts of the LORD [YHVH], holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.**

**""On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight [between the two evenings] is the LORD's [YHVH's] Passover.**

**""And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD [YHVH]; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH] for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.""**

(Lev. 23:4-8)

The obvious reason is because this is the day on which the lamb was sacrificed, it is the sacrificial day, the preparation day to the First Day of Unleavened Bread. In fact, it is the greatest 'preparation day' of the entire year.

~ Passover Preparation ~

It is important to understand some of the ancient customs that have become a part of the Passover season.

The first act in preparing for Passover (in the generic sense) is to put all leavened products out of the home. At this season, leaven becomes a symbol for sin, the kind of sin that 'puffs up':

**"Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ [Messiah], our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."** (I Cor. 5:6-8)

This was not a new understanding that came forth from the pen of Paul. It was the traditional, ancient understanding of the Jewish people, that leaven represented sin and that, as leaven was put out of the home, sin must also be put out of the life of each individual. However, now there is one major difference. Believers have the sacrifice of *Y'shua* to take away their inner leaven (sin). Prior to the resurrection, the Jews could only look forward to the day when the ultimate Atonement would be made for them.

So it was, in *Y'shua's* time that the Jews began to clean their homes on *Nisan 1*, the beginning of the sacred year. They would wait until *Nisan 1*, because they never knew for sure if there would be an additional month added at the end of *Adar*, the twelfth month. If the barley was not yet headed out, they would wait an addition lunar cycle before proclaiming the month of *Nisan*, calling the additional month *Adar II*.

On *Nisan 10* the lambs were chosen by each family group. This was the very day that *Y'shua* rode into Jerusalem on the ass and was beseeched by the crowd chanting *Hosanna* ("save us now"):

**"Now when they came near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent out two of His disciples; and He said to them, 'Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here.'"**

**"So they went their way, found the colt tied by the door outside on the street and they loosed it ..."**

**"Then they brought the colt to Jesus [*Y'shua*] and threw their garments on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their garments on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:**

**"Hosanna!**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of**

**the LORD [*YHVH*]!**

**Blessed is the kingdom of our father David**

**That comes in the name of the LORD [*YHVH*]!**

**Hosanna in the highest!"**

**"And Jesus [*Y'shua*] went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."** (Mark 11:1-4, 7-11)

Just as the Passover lamb was brought into each Jewish home and examined for the next four days to be sure that it was without blemish, so *Y'shua* (our Passover lamb) came to the Temple (His Father's house) to be examined. Each day *Y'shua* returned to His Father's house, and each day He was questioned by the Sadducees and the Pharisees. In the end He was found to be without blemish and eligible to be our Passover Sacrifice.

~ The Search For Leaven ~

As the Passover *Seder* approached, the house cleaning intensified. Then, as the evening portion of *Nisan 14* approached, the woman of each home prepared for a special ritual called *Bedikat Hametz* (Beh-dee-khat' Hah-mehtz'), the Search for Leaven. Ten pieces of leavened bread were hidden throughout the house. After sunset the father and the children would take a candle, a wooden spoon, a feather, and a linen bag. They would go throughout the house to find the ten pieces of leaven that were hidden. This represented the hidden 'sin' that each of us has stored away somewhere in our minds and hearts.

As each piece of leaven was found it would be scraped from its resting place onto the wooden spoon with the feather. Then it was transferred into the linen bag. When all ten pieces had been found, the utensils were bound together and set aside for the night.

The next morning was a busy day of preparation. Leaven could be eaten in the morning until the third hour (about nine a.m.). All leaven had to be removed from the home by the sixth hour (noon), although the Pharisees put a fence around the law by saying that it must be removed by the fifth hour (eleven a.m.).

While the mother was finishing the house cleaning the father would take the linen bag containing the ten pieces of leaven, the feather, and the wooden spoon to the local synagogue where a bonfire had been started. After a brief prayer the entire package of 'sin' was thrown into the fire to be consumed. The *lulav* from *Succoth* or the willows from *Hoshana Rabbah* were used to light the fire. This ritual was called *Bi-ur Hametz* (Bee-oor' Hah-mehtz'), the Burning of the Leaven.

Meanwhile, another ritual was being observed. The firstborn son in each family was required to fast during the daylight hours of *Nisan 14*, Passover Day. This practice was to remember that God had spared the firstborn children of Israel on the Passover night in Egypt. This fast is called *Ta-anit Bekhorim* (Tah-ah-need' Behkh-ohr-eem') The Fast of the Firstborn. Sometimes the father of the family would also fast just in case his son did not.

Once the house had been entirely cleared of leaven the family would gather for *Bittul Hametz* (Beet-tool' Hah-mehtz'), the Nullification of Leaven. This was a prayer that was said to declare that to the best of their knowledge all leaven had been removed from the home, and if any unknown leaven still resided there to ask God to make it as though it did not exist.

How many times have we as Believers asked God to forgive us of our sins, both known and unknown?

The rest of the day was spent in preparation for the Passover *Seder* meal which was to be held after sundown. At the ninth hour (three p.m.) the father, along with other adults males who were to share the Passover *Seder* with the family, would be at the Temple for the ritual slaughter of the lamb. Upon returning they would build the fire (or perhaps others had already started the fire while they were gone) and roast the lamb. Meanwhile the women were busy preparing all of the necessary food items for the *Seder* meal, including unleavened bread, for it was required that everyone partake of unleavened bread at the *Seder*.

The parallels between these activities and what was taking place in the life of *Y'shua* is quite astounding.

- ◆ On the evening of *Nisan 14*, when the Jewish families were searching for leaven, *Y'shua* was also searching for leaven among His disciples. He found two pieces, one very large and one much smaller. The first, of course, was the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. The second was Peter who bragged that he would never forsake his Master, *Y'shua*. He even strapped on a sword when they went to the Garden of Gethsemane just to prove how determined he was to fight for *Y'shua*, whom Peter knew to be the Messiah.
- ◆ The ten pieces of leaven found in each home were searched out with a candle, then placed on a piece of wood (the spoon) and deposited into a linen bag. The next morning as *Y'shua* was being beaten, they were being put to the fire. Can anyone miss the symbolism? The leaven represents the sins of each individual person and home, the candle represents the *Torah* which illuminates our sins, the wooden spoon is the crucifixion stake, the linen bag is the linen in which the body of *Y'shua* was wrapped, and the fire was both the beating and the death of Our Saviour.
- ◆ At the third hour (nine a.m.) everyone stopped eating leaven. This is when *Y'shua* was being nailed to the stake. It was the beginning of the removal of leaven (sin) from the lives of the Believers.
- ◆ At the sixth hour (noon) all leaven was put out of the house. It was at this time that *Y'shua* took upon Himself all the sins of the world from creation until the end of time on this earth. It was also the time when the great darkness came over the earth for the Light of the world had taken on all the darkness of the world in His acceptance of our sins.
- ◆ At the ninth hour (three p.m.) our Passover Lamb died upon the stake at the very same time as the High Priest cut the throat of the very first Passover lamb, which was offered for all of Israel.

◆ Just prior to sunset, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (a Pharisee) laid the linen wrapped body of *Y'shua* into the tomb. At that same moment, all over Jerusalem, the chief woman of each house was lighting the Holyday candles in commemoration of the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt. Now, though they did not know it, they had just received an even greater redemption through the blood of the Lamb, *Y'shua*, who's blood covered all the doorposts and lintels of those who would come to Believe that He is the prophesied Messiah.

◆ Meanwhile, the Fast of the Firstborn was coming to an end as they began the *Seder ceremonies*. The first thing they took was *The Cup of Sanctification*, as they were now sanctified by the Blood of the Lamb. Since all Believers are considered to be a type of firstborn ("**...a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**" [Jas. 1:18]) with *Y'shua* being the (**...firstborn among many brethren.**" [Rom. 8:29]), it becomes obvious that His sacrifice is also for the 'firstborn,' just as the Egyptian Passover had typified.

The symbolism found in the Passover is so rich and full that one can hardly grasp all of it. We encourage every one of you to set your heart to study this symbolism and search out the marvelous truths that lie buried within the scriptures and within the ceremonies that accompany the Festivals. Your life will be richly blessed as a result, for your faith will increase by leaps and bounds as you come to understand the marvelous tapestry that God has woven into these days.

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## ~ Resurrection ~ ~ And Acceptance ~

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?  
He is not here, but is risen!"  
Luke 24:5-6

"I am ascending to My Father and your Father,  
To My God and your God."  
John 20:17



While all of the coincidences pertaining to the crucifixion of *Y'shua* and the patterns found in the Passover rituals are quite amazing, none of it would have meant a thing if it were not for what happened three days later. The world would never have noticed if the story ended with the burial of a Jewish rabbi from the *Galil* in a tomb in Jerusalem. Only His most intimate family and friends would have given it much thought. As to the Jewish public in general, they had seen self-proclaimed messiahs come and go and would, no doubt, see more of them in the future. Somehow, those messiahs



never seemed to pan out, and life went on as usual under the heel of the Romans.

But this story did not end in that tomb. Rather, the gospels testify to a pivotal event in human history; when a man died, was buried and three days later rose up from His death sleep and appeared to many alive and well. Even more amazing was the fact that it was done according to a plan that was laid down by God Himself, a millennium and one-half before the event took place. The story is told in the rich hidden meanings of the Festivals of God. The resurrection and acceptance of *Yeshua HaMashiach* by His Father in heaven, were all played out in rehearsals year after year after year.

This part of the story also begins back during the time of the Exodus. In Leviticus, chapter 23, God gave instructions concerning all of the festivals that the children of Israel were required to celebrate. Each festival and each ceremony contained a message about the great plan that God had devised to redeem fallen man. We have just seen the awesome symbolism that was hidden in the Passover sacrifice and the First Day of Unleavened Bread. For those who could not see, it is merely a reminder of the Egyptian experience of the forefathers of Israel. But to those with eyes to see and ears to hear, it is a grand prophecy about the redemption to be brought by the *Mashiach*, the Anointed One of God.

### ~ The Wave Sheaf Offering ~

God commanded that a curiously unique ceremony be performed during the Days of Unleavened Bread once the children of Israel had come into the promised land. Many Believers have ignored this ceremony because it does not fall on a Holyday, and is seldom discussed in sermons. The ceremony commonly called the Wave Sheaf Offering. It is also known as *Yom HaBikkurim* (Yohm Hah-Beek-koo-reem = Day of Firstfruits) and it begins a fifty day period called *Sfirat HaOmer* (Sfee-raht' Hah-Oh-mehr' = The Counting of the Omer):

**"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them; 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD [YHVH], to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it, and you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD [YHVH]. Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH], for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.'"**  
(Lev. 23:9-14)

Just what constituted the Wave Sheaf Offering? A casual reading of the scriptures would seem to indicate that each farmer would cut a sheaf of grain, take it to the Temple, and the Priest would somehow wave it around in a ceremony, but that

was not the way it was practiced. This is a prime example of where the Scriptures do not tell the entire story, rather only the essence of the ceremony is given as a directive of when and how it was to be done. The details of the manner in which this ceremony was to be performed must have been handed down through the oral traditions of the Priesthood from generation to generation.

### ~ Disputed Day ~

First of all, there was an argument about when this ceremony was to be performed. The Sadducees (the Priests and Levites) said that the Wave Sheaf ceremony was to be performed on the day following the weekly Sabbath that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This would always place the Wave Sheaf Offering on the first day of the week. Meanwhile, the Pharisees said that the Wave Sheaf ceremony was to be performed on the day following the First Day of Unleavened Bread. They considered that day to be the Sabbath which was intended in verse 11. This would mean the Wave Sheaf Offering would always be held on *Nisan 16*.

The controversy would not have been too serious except for the fact that the Wave Sheaf Offering becomes the basis for determining when the next Festival, *Shavu'ot* (Shaw-voo'ot' = Pentecost) would fall. If one counts from the day following the weekly Sabbath, it causes *Shavu'ot* to always fall on a Sunday, fifty days later. If one counts from *Nisan 16* it causes *Shavu'ot* to always fall on *Sivan 6*.

This is another of those scriptural stalemates. It is our firmly held opinion that the Sadducees were correct in this case. They were the Priests and Levites, and they knew what the ancient practice had been since at least the time of Ezra. More importantly, the Hebrew word *Shabbat* (Shah-baht) is only used for the weekly Sabbath. Another word, *Shabbaton* (Shah-bah-tone') is used in the three cases where Holydays are referred to by the English word Sabbath.\* All of the other references to Holydays are indicated by the Hebrew words: *Chag* (hahg = festival), *chagag* (hah-gahg' = to dance), *moed* (mow-ehd' = appointed time) or *Kodesh Mikrah* (Koh-dehsh' Meek-rah' = Holy Convocation).

A further point involves the need to count the days to arrive at *Shavu'ot*. If God had intended *Shavu'ot* to always fall on *Sivan 6* it seems that He would have named the day (*Sivan 6*) as He did with all of the other Holydays. By using the weekly Sabbath as the reference point, it becomes absolutely necessary to count the days, since *Shavu'ot* can fall anytime from *Sivan 6* to *Sivan 12*, but always on a Sunday.

Once again, we must learn to accept the heart felt opinions of other brethren on this non-salvational issue. After all, this controversy is well over two thousand years old and it has never been resolved. May the Messiah come quickly and lead us into all truth.

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\* It is interesting to note that the Greek New Testament scriptures always use the transliterated Hebrew word "*Shabbaton*," which means a high day or Holyday. In turn, this Greek word has always been translated into English as 'Sabbath.' This makes for a less precise rendering of the word 'Sabbath' in the Greek New Testament as it can mean either the weekly Sabbath or a Holyday. One must make the determination by the context of the passage in question. However, in Hebrew the word *Shabbat* always means the weekly Sabbath, while the word *Shabbaton* always means a high Holyday.

~ Timelines ~

Before proceeding, it is important to establish the timelines involved in the events of the crucifixion/resurrection week. It was mentioned in a previous chapter that *Y'shua* made His entry into Jerusalem on *Nisan 10* as the perfect Passover Lamb. It is our firmly held belief that *Nisan 10* was a Sabbath day that year. On *Nisan 11-13* *Y'shua* spent His days at the Temple and His nights at Bethany, about two miles away. *Nisan 13* brings us to the third day of the week (Tuesday), which was the day the disciples went to prepare for the Passover *Seder*. After sundown on Tuesday (it now being *Nisan 14*) *Y'shua* went, with the twelve to the upper room for the *Seder*. In all probability there were more people present than just *Y'shua* and the twelve. For one thing, *Y'shua's* mother was in town. It would have been unthinkable for Him to hold a Passover *Seder* without inviting His widowed mother. In fact, it was not considered proper to hold a Passover *Seder* with just men, for women and children were supposed to be an integral part of the entire Passover experience. Parts of the *Seder* required the participation of children, for example, the asking of the four Questions. The only part women were excluded from was the actual slaying of the Passover lamb since they were not allowed to go into the Court of Israel. However, even the women and children could watch that event by standing in the balcony of the Court of the Women where they could see into the Court of Israel.

If the Last Supper was held on Tuesday night, then *Y'shua* was crucified on Wednesday, *Nisan 14*, the same day the Passover lambs were slain at the Temple. By Wednesday night, when the Jews were sitting down to their Passover *Seder* meals, *Y'shua* was asleep in the grave. For three full days and three full nights He would remain there as a silent witness to the sinfulness of mankind:

**"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.'**

**"But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'"** (Matt. 12:38-40)

**"Now the LORD [YHVH] had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."** (Jonah 1:17)

~ Cutting the Wave Sheaf ~

*Y'shua* was laid in the tomb just prior to sunset on Wednesday. Three days and three nights later brings us to sunset at the end of the weekly Sabbath. Was there any important Festival ritual taking place at that precise time?

YES! The Wave Sheaf was being cut. What does the Wave Sheaf represent?

**"...the firstfruits of your harvest..."** (Lev. 23:10)

**"But now Christ [Messiah] is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."**  
(I Cor. 15:20)

What wonderful rehearsals God has prepared for those that are able to hear them. Here is the First of the Firstfruits rising up out of His grave at the exact moment in time that the Wave Sheaf is being cut free from the earth.

Alfred Edersheim was a Messianic Jew who lived during the nineteenth century. He wrote a book entitled *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. This work is considered a classic because Edersheim knew well the history and customs of the Jewish people. He was one of the first men to bring the knowledge of our Hebrew Roots to the attention of the general Christian public. The following passage, concerning the cutting of the Wave Sheaf, is quoted from this book. Edersheim follows the custom of the Pharisees and places the cutting of the Wave Sheaf at the end of the first Holyday, the First Day of Unleavened Bread on *Nisan 15*. However, the principles involving Sabbath (holy time) are just as pertinent to the end of the weekly Sabbath as they would be to the end of a Holyday Sabbath.

"It was probably about the same time, that a noisy throng prepared to follow delegates from the Sanhedrin to the ceremony of cutting the Passover-sheaf. ... This Passover-sheaf was reaped in public the evening before it was offered, and it was to witness this ceremony that the crowd had gathered around the elders. Already on *14 Nisan* the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reaped had been marked out, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down, according to custom, in the sheltered Ashes-Valley across Kidron. When the time for cutting the sheaf had arrived -- that is, on the evening of the 15th *Nisan* [*in our scenario it would be 17th Nisan*] even though it were a Sabbath, just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and basket, set to work. Clearly to bring out what was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: 'Has the sun gone down?' 'With this sickle?' 'Into this basket?' 'On this Sabbath?' ... and lastly, 'Shall I reap?' Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down barley to the amount of one ephah, ..." (Vol. 2; Book IV, p. 619; underlining and bracketed statement added).

Some explanation is necessary. All of the questions had to be answered in the affirmative. One of the questions is, "Has the sun gone down?" The answer is yes. Another question, "On this Sabbath?" The answer is yes. How can this be?

The answer lies in an understanding of when the Sabbath day begins and when it ends. Today the Sabbath begins eighteen minutes before sundown when the Sabbath candles are lit to welcome the Sabbath day, known as the Bride or Queen Sabbath. In ancient practice the candles were lit just before the sun went down. Neither does the Sabbath day end precisely at sunset the following evening. In fact Sabbath does not end

until a ceremony called *Havdalah* (Hahv-dah'-lah) is performed, and *Havdalah* cannot even begin until three stars are visible. It may be as much as an hour after sunset before three stars are visible in the night time sky, especially when the moon is full. So, to the Hebrew, it can easily be well after sundown and still be the Sabbath day.\*

Another question that has bothered some people is how the Priests could do this type of work while it was still the Sabbath day. The answer again is quite simple. This is the work of the Temple and it is perfectly legal that Temple service be performed on every Sabbath day. *Y'shua* pointed this out when He said:

**"Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"** (Matt. 12:5)

It was perfectly legal, in fact commanded, that the Wave Sheaf be cut at the end of the Sabbath day because this was the precise time that the Messiah would rise up out of His grave and be cut free from the earth.

#### ~ Gospel Confirmation ~

But some will ask, "Do not the gospels say that *Y'shua* rose from the grave on the first day of the week?"

No, they do not. What they say is that the tomb was found empty on the first day of the week, *Y'shua* having already departed from it. The problem lies in the way in which a key verse has been translated into the English language.

**"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb."** (Matt. 28:1)

The verse above is quoted from the New King James Version (NKJV). Other translations are similar. It appears to indicate that the two Mary's (*Miriam* in Hebrew), went to the tomb on Sunday morning, at dawn, and found it empty. This is not what the verse actually says. First of all the word "*day*" is an added word. This is clear because it is in italics.

A more literal translation can be found in the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, by George Ricker Berry:

**"Now late on Sabbath, as it was getting dusk toward (the) first (day) of (the) week, came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."** (Matt. 28:1)

YES! It was late on the Sabbath day when the two Mary's came to the tomb and it was already empty. But can this be proven? YES! The key Greek word is; *epiphosko* (Strong's #2020). It means; "*to grow light, to dawn, to draw on.*" This would seem to indicate a morning sunrise. However look at the only other place where this word is used:

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\* It is often very difficult to determine exactly when the sun goes down. For example, buildings, trees, hills or clouds may block the clear view. However, one always knows when it is almost sundown just by looking outside, so the candles can be lit at an appropriate time, thus beginning the Sabbath day while it is still light outside. Likewise, not ending *Shabbat* until it is dark enough for three stars to be visible (whether there is cloud cover or not) is also quite easy to determine. God did not make this a complicated process that required a computer, or the daily newspaper and a wristwatch. The process is made easy for real people living in a real world.

**"The day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near."** (Luke 23:54)

The two English words "drew near" are rendered from this same Greek word *epiphosko*. Since the Sabbath day always begins at sunset, it is impossible for anyone to say this meant 'morning dawn' as we understand that word. No, just as the Sabbath 'drew near' in Luke 23:54, so the first day of the week 'drew near' in Matt. 28:1. This is confirmed in another verse that records what was likely the same visit.

**"On the first day [note added word] of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."** (John 20:1)

It was not Sunday morning, it was still dark! It was what we would call Saturday night. The sun had already set and it was the very beginning hours of the new day and the new week, possibly about 8 or 9 p.m.

#### ~ Other Visits ~

It is quite true that the other two gospel accounts show a Sunday morning visit by a group of women. This cannot be denied, but this was a totally different visit than the one that took place on Saturday night by the two Mary's, or possibly a separate visit by Mary Magdalene alone.

It needs to be understood that the four Gospel accounts do not all speak of one single visit to the tomb of *Y'shua*. At least two, and possibly three different visits are recounted for us. The account in Matthew is probably a very condensed version of two different visits. This technique is not unusual in Hebrew writing, and most scholars now agree that the original gospel accounts were probably written in either Hebrew or Aramaic, not in Greek. The Greek manuscripts that are used to translate the New Testament today are all translations themselves, so we are reading a translation of a translation. No wonder it gets confusing.

It is our opinion that *Y'shua HaMashiach* was resurrected and walked out of His tomb on late Sabbath, probably just after the sun had set but before the three stars appeared. This occurred just as the Priests were putting the sickle to the barley in the cutting of the Wave Sheaf ceremony, and it was still considered to be *Shabbat*. This was also the exact instant when the earthquake took place which rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb, not so that *Y'shua* could exit, but so that the disciples and others could enter and see that He had risen from the dead.

#### ~ Preparing the Offering ~

Once the barley sheaf had been cut, it was necessary for it to be properly prepared for the offering which was to be made the next morning. During the night the newly cut grain went through a very demanding process. The grain was brought into the courtyard of the Temple. There it was thrashed with canes so that the grain would not be injured. Then it was put into a pan with small holes and 'parched' by passing it over a fire. Every piece of grain had to be touched by the fire. Then it was

ground into meal and sifted through thirteen sieves, so that the resulting flour became very fine. It was said that one of the *Gizbarim* (Geetz-bah-ream' = treasurers) would plunge his hand into the flour. When his hand came out without any flour adhering to it, the offering was considered to be ready.

### ~ The Offering Ceremony ~

The Wave Sheaf Offering was performed the morning following the cutting of the barley sheaf (on the first day of the week) during the morning Temple service.

A tenth part of the flour was taken for the Wave Sheaf Offering. This amounted to an *omer*, (about five pints) that being a tenth part of the *ephah* that had been cut. It was prepared like any other Meal offering. Oil (a log = about three-fourths of a pint) and a handful of frankincense were poured over the flour. It was then 'waved' before *YHVH*, and a handful was taken and burned on the altar. The remainder of the offering was eaten by the Priests.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the 'waving' was done as follows:

"The offering was placed on the extended hands of the priest, who moved them backward and forward (to counteract the effects of injurious winds) and then upward and downward (to counteract the effects of injurious dews). As soon as the omer ceremony was completed the people of Jerusalem were permitted to eat of the newly harvested grain; people of towns far from Jerusalem might not do so until after noon, when it was certain that the ceremony at Jerusalem had been concluded." (Vol. IX, p. 399).

It was considered to be one of the most important ceremonies of the entire year. Some felt it was a repayment to God for the manna that their fathers had eaten in the wilderness. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* continues:

"The virtue of the omer was so great that, according to the Rabbis, on its account God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham. The omer made peace between husband and wife, that is, the meal offering of jealousy did, which consisted of the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal (cp. Num. v. 15). It was the omer that rescued the Israelites from the Midianites in the time of Gideon, from the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah, from the Babylonians in the time of Ezekiel, and from the Amalekites in the time of Haman, these conclusions being inferred by the Rabbis from the word 'barley' mentioned in connection with each of these events." (Vol. IX, p. 399).

Once the Wave Sheaf Offering had been accepted by God, the general barley harvest could begin. About the time the barley harvest was completed the wheat harvest began, and when the wheat harvest ended the early fruit harvest began. All three of these harvests met at the Festival of *Shavu'ot*, The Feast of Firstfruits. The fruit harvest then continued until the end of the yearly festival season which culminated in *Succoth* (The Feast of Tabernacles).

### ~ Meanwhile Back At the Tomb ~

The sun had set and *Havdalah*\* had been completed. Mary Magdalene (and possibly the other Mary) decided that she (they) wanted to visit the tomb where the body of *Y'shua* had been laid. By this time (about eight p.m.) the still nearly full moon was coming up, so that it was possible to see along the path to the tomb. Arriving at the tomb, she found it empty:

**"On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb." (John 20:1)**

**"Now late on Sabbath, as it was getting dusk toward (the) first (day) of (the) week, came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." (Matt. 28:1, Interlinear, Greek-English New Testament, literal translation).**

She (they?) went back and fetched Peter and John. If the other Mary had accompanied Mary Magdalene on the first trip, she apparently did not return to the tomb. Peter and John saw the empty tomb and left, not knowing what to think:

**"But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus [*Y'shua*] had lain.**

**"Then they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.'**

**"Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus [*Y'shua*] standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus [*Y'shua*].**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.'**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to her, 'Mary!' she turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say Teacher).**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.""**

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\* *Havdalah* is an ancient ceremony that marks the end of the Sabbath. It involves lighting a multiwick candle, and passing around a container of sweet smelling spices so that everyone can remember the sweetness of *Shabbat*. Then a cup placed in a saucer is filled to overflowing with wine. A *Brachah* is said, the wine is sampled and then the candle is extinguished in the wine that has spilled into the saucer. At this point the room is in complete darkness. Each person has a small candle. A single candle is lit, which is then used to light the next candle, and the next and so on until all the candles in the room are lit. This is what took place when the apostle Paul was visiting Troas:

"Now on the first day [note added word] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together." (Acts 20:7-8)

The Hebrew idiom 'there were many lamps' plainly signifies that this was a Saturday night and they had celebrated *Havdalah* after the meal which ended *Shabbat*.

**"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."**  
(John 20:11-18)

They did not believe her.

~ Acceptance ~

It was Saturday night and *Y'shua* had already been cut free from the earth. However, He had not yet gone to His Father in heaven for acceptance, for it was not yet time for the Wave Sheaf to be offered at the Temple. Once again, the symbolism and timing is astounding. Only the great Creator God could have orchestrated this event to correspond exactly with the Festival rehearsals that He had initiated so many centuries ago.

An extremely interesting parallel is found in the Temple service which is recalled by the words *Y'shua* spoke to Mary in the garden. The King James Version renders verse 17 as follows:

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father..."** (John 20:17 KJV)

A Priest could not go on duty at the Temple unless he was ritually clean. This was accomplished by each Priest being immersed (baptized) in a specially constructed *Mikvah* (Meek'-vah) or immersion pool prior to going on duty for that day. When sacrifices were offered, part of the ritual usually involved the casting or sprinkling of blood on the altar. The Priest would catch the blood in a silver basin that was pointed on the bottom so that it could not be set down without the contents spilling out, for the blood had to be cast on the altar before it coagulated. During the time between when the Priest caught the blood and it was cast on the altar, the Priest was not allowed to be touched by another person. For if that other person were in some way ritually unclean, it would render the Priest, and therefore the blood of the sacrifice, also ritually unclean and thereby invalidate the sacrifice. Thus, if anyone came near the Priest, while he was making his way to the altar, he would say to them something like, "Do not touch me for I have not yet ascended to the altar."

*Y'shua* had not yet ascended to the altar in heaven to be accepted by the Father. It was for this reason that He used words similar to those of the Priest on his way to the altar. The blood of the perfect sacrifice needed to be brought to the Tabernacle in Heaven for acceptance as the First of the Firstfruits.

Just as the Wave Sheaf was offered in the Temple during the morning service on the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread, so *Y'shua* offered Himself before the Father in the heavenly Tabernacle at the very same time. Once *Y'shua's* offering had been accepted, He could be touched and handled:

**"Now as they said these things, Jesus [*Y'shua*] Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace be unto you [*Shalom Aleichem*].'**

**"But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.**

**"And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and**

**My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."**  
(Luke 24:36-39)

This occurred later the same day. By afternoon *Y'shua* had been accepted by the Father as the perfect sacrifice to remove all the sins of the world, and He was now back on earth and willing to be touched and handled.

~ Where Did *Y'shua* Spend The Night? ~

When first hearing this scenario, some have asked; "Where did *Y'shua* spend the night between the time He was resurrected and the formal acceptance in heaven the next morning?"

There is a rather obscure scripture found in the first epistle of the apostle Peter:

**"For Christ [*Messiah*] also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water."** (I Peter 3:18-19)

A common Christian teaching is that, while He was in the tomb, Christ went and preached to the fallen spirits who were in prison.

This is a subject that cannot be given full attention in this article, however, let it be said that it is the opinion of this writer that this event took place during the night after *Y'shua* was resurrected, but before He went to be accepted by the Father. It could not have occurred while He was dead for:

**"...the dead know nothing,  
And they have no more reward,  
For the memory of them is forgotten."** (Eccl. 9:5)

~ The Firstfruits ~

Because *Y'shua* was the perfect sinless lamb without blemish, His sacrificial offering as the 'First of the Firstfruits' was accepted by God the Father.

**"But Christ [*Messiah*] came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ [*Messiah*], who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"**

**"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."**

(Heb. 9:11-15)

**"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."**  
(Heb. 10:12-14)

Now the harvest of the rest of the barley crop could begin, closely followed by the wheat harvest. The harvesting of these two grains were completed by *Shavu'ot*, the Festival of Pentecost. These early grain harvests represent the early harvest of Believers who are to be a part of the first resurrection. The greater harvest symbolized by *Succoth* comes at a later time when the second resurrection takes place.

**"And I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus [*Y'shua*] and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ [*Messiah*] for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."**

(Rev. 20:4-5)

~ Summary ~

It is our fervent hope that the information contained in this article will provide a depth of understanding to the Believer that has not previously been available. If, by chance, the reader does not fully agree with the timelines set forth herein, please do not reject the great truths that the ancient ceremonies pictured, for God has given all of us limited understanding at this time.

**"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."**  
(I Cor. 13:12 KJV)

The reason for this cloudiness of understanding is twofold;

(1) So that each Believer will **"Study to show thyself approved unto God..."** (II Tim. 2:15a) to the best of their individual abilities. (2) To see if people will still love one another and accept one another as brethren in the body of Messiah even when they strongly disagree in detail. The tendency of carnal human nature is to write off another person when they do not agree with one's firmly held beliefs. However, we are told two very important things along this line:

**"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things."**  
(Rom. 14:1)

**"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."**  
(Rom. 12:18)

It is very important that we do not let our own view of times and places obscure the wonderful mosaic that God has created for us through the Festival of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. When one considers how each detail in this festival was played out in its full significance through the life, death and resurrection of *Y'shua*, we can only stand in complete awe.

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