



So You Want to Observe

# Passover *Part 2*

*by Tim Kelley*

Last week we talked about all the various mitzvot pertaining to the observance of the Passover. We found that –

- The first Passover was unique. There has been no Passover like it since
- All subsequent Passovers are to remember the first
- Along with many of the instructions pertaining to the first Passover, God gave these instructions for each subsequent Passover
  - Anyone who eats it must be circumcised
  - It must be killed in the place YHWH placed His name
  - The priests play a role in the sacrifice
  - A person must be ceremonially clean to kill and eat the Passover
  - It must be eaten in the place YHWH placed His name

It appears that since YHWH established all these “rules”, there is very little leeway in regards to how Passover is observed . . . God has established the way, so we must do it His way! That’s quite the way it seems, especially when we look at the example of David’s first attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Notice what King David said when speaking to the Levites after the death of Uzzah:

*“ . . . You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. <sup>13</sup> For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.” (1 Chronicles 15:12-13)*

Yes, God does expect things to be done a certain way. Notice what the problem was in regards to carrying the ark. David said that it was because they “*did not consult Him*”. They failed to consult the scriptures to see how YHWH wanted things done. In too many cases, that’s the way it is with us, we think that we can “let the spirit guide us” in regards to many of the matters that deal with our spiritual lives, but oftentimes, that leads to disaster. That’s what happened with David. He got caught up in the zeal to bring the Ark to Jerusalem and it cost a man’s life.

We must not let our new-found zeal to follow the Hebraic walk cause us to stumble in other areas. That’s why it’s important to study the foundations – the Torah – to see what YHWH has to say about these matters before we get ourselves into trouble. In the process, we may find that we need to slow down a little and weigh things out so as to not get discouraged.

Nearly 2700 years ago, another king found himself filled with zeal for God. King Hezekiah was anointed king of Judah when he was 25 years old. His father was the evil King Ahaz. Before King Ahaz died, he took various articles out of the Temple and offered them as tribute to the Assyrian king Tiglas-Pileser or made idols from them. He then closed the doors of the Temple and stopped all Temple worship.

When Hezekiah became king, he immediately set out to right the wrongs that his father had committed. He re-opened the Temple and instructed the priests to begin cleaning and repairing the Temple, but before they began the process, Hezekiah had them sanctify themselves before doing the work. This is what Hezekiah said:

*“Hear me, Levites! Now consecrate (קִדְּשׁוּ qadash) yourselves, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place. (ESV 2 Chronicles 29:5).*

Hezekiah apparently checked the scriptures to see what God expected before the priests would be able to once again enter the Temple. Apparently, Hezekiah knew it could be dangerous for the priests to enter the Temple in a state of uncleanness, so he had them follow the process, or at least part of the process, that YHWH had given in the Torah before they began to clean the Temple.

Let's look back at part of the consecration process that the priests went through:

*Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and also on his sons and his sons' garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. (ESV Leviticus 8:30)*

Continuing on it says that:

*<sup>33</sup> . . . you shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for it will take seven days to ordain you. <sup>34</sup> As has been done today, the LORD has commanded to be done to make atonement for you. <sup>35</sup> At the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall remain day and night for seven days, performing what the LORD has charged, so that you do not die, for so I have been commanded." <sup>36</sup> And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded by Moses. (ESV Leviticus 8:33-36)*

So Hezekiah, even in his zeal to restore the worship of YHVH, waited so that He could follow the instructions given by god.

*They began to consecrate on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. (ESV 2 Chronicles 29:17)*

It would appear that Hezekiah was a stickler for the details. He saw to it that all the Temple articles were replaced, then he started the sacrifices once again. In verse 24 it indicates that he even had the priest offer a sin offering for all Israel – Judah as well as the recently exiled Northern Tribes. As the story continues, we see that after the Temple and many of the priests were consecrated, Hezekiah invited the people to offer sacrifices. The people overwhelmed the priests with sacrifices, so much so that the Levites, contrary to the Torah<sup>1</sup>, had to participate in the cleaning of the sacrificial animals. Thus we see that because of the sudden zeal of the people, strict application of the Torah was set aside. That appears to be OK because of the circumstances. Notice what it says:

*Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had enabled the people to accomplish, because it had happened so suddenly. (TNK 2 Chronicles 29:36)*

Let's now look at the events that followed. Remember that the cleansing of the priests and the subsequent cleaning of the Temple began on the first day of the first month<sup>2</sup> - the season of the Passover. If you add up the days it took to consecrate the priests and the Temple, you'll see that it was not complete till the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month – 2 days too late to offer Passover lambs<sup>3</sup>. But Hezekiah wanted all Israel and Judah to keep the Passover that year, so what does Hezekiah do? He decides to postpone Passover for one month. Can he do that?

Numbers 9 shows that a person who is unable to offer his lamb on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Aviv may do so one month later, but only for two reasons – being in a state of ritual impurity due to touching a corpse or because he is unable to make it to the Tabernacle or Temple because of a being on a trip<sup>4</sup>. If you notice, these reasons are not the same as those offered by Hezekiah. His reasoning was that 1) there were not enough priests ready to take care of the offerings, and 2) the people had not made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:2-3). Hezekiah had ample reasons to simply set aside the Passover that year and be ready the next, but that's not what happened.

Hezekiah then sent a letter to his Jewish brothers and to the Northern tribes inviting the remnant from the recently exiled people to keep Passover with their Jewish brothers in Jerusalem. His plea to them could also be taken as a prophecy for us today:

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 1 – 5 shows that after the animal is killed, the priests are to take part in collecting the blood and cutting the animal up. The Levites had no part in the sacrificial process.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles 29:17

<sup>3</sup> The LXX suggests the work was completed on the 13<sup>th</sup>, thus Passover could have taken place.

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 9:1-14

<sup>6</sup> . . . "O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria . . . <sup>9</sup> For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him." (2 Chronicles 30:6-9)

Hezekiah was basically stating that if the remnant of the tribes would join with Judah in celebrating Israel's redemption, then their actions would make it better for their families who were taken captive by the Assyrians. Unfortunately, his words fell pretty much on deaf ears. Only a small remnant of the remnant accepted Hezekiah's invitation and made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to keep the Passover in the second month. As it says:

<sup>11</sup> However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup> The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 30:11-12)

The Tnakh makes this passage a little more clear:

*The hand of God was on Judah, too, making them of a single mind to carry out the command of the king and officers concerning the ordinance of the LORD.* (<sup>TNK</sup> 2 Chronicles 30:12)

Apparently, because those from Israel humbled themselves enough to go to Jerusalem, God put it in Judah's heart to accept them so that they could celebrate the festival together. A little background will help us to understand what it meant for those Israelites who had humbled themselves.

Shortly after Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel was split between Judah and the Northern tribes. Jereboam, Israel's new king, set up altars at various places in the northern kingdom and Israel began a worship system somewhat like that given by YHVH, but different. As time went on, worship became centered around Shechem at the base of Mt. Gerazim, which just so happened to be the former home of Joshua (from the Northern Tribes) and was the burial spot of the bones of Joseph. As we know, the Samaritans eventually built a temple on Mount Gerazim, which set the stage for Yeshua's discussion with the Samaritan woman<sup>5</sup>.

So for the people from the northern tribes to come humbly to Jerusalem was a statement that they had been wrong in their worship. In this case, the Jewish people humbled themselves also and accepted Israel with open arms. Such is not the case today . . . not yet.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the second month, all the people who had come to Jerusalem brought their lambs to the Temple. There again, they overwhelmed the priests with sacrifices and thus the Levites again took part in the process – they collected the blood of the lambs and handed to the priests. In some cases, they killed the Passover lamb for a pilgrim who were ceremonially unclean<sup>6</sup>. It appears the people were more zealous than the priesthood!

Now look at what it says about some from Judah and many of those from the northern tribes:

<sup>18</sup> For a majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. (<sup>ESV</sup> 2 Chronicles 30:18)

Was that OK? Did Hezekiah just say, "well, their heart was right"? Did their actions dismiss the laws and ordinances of YHVH? Absolutely not! Hezekiah knew that what they had done, in regards to eating the Passover in an unclean state, was wrong . . . it was sin – a transgression of the law pertaining to Passover. So what did Hezekiah do? He prayed:

*"May the good LORD pardon (כָּפַר kaphar - atone ) everyone <sup>19</sup> who sets his heart to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness."* (2 Chronicles 30:18-19)

And what was YHVH's response?

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<sup>5</sup> See John 4:5 – 43. Notice vs. 20

<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 7:19-21 prohibits a person who is unclean to eat of the sacrifices, including the Passover

<sup>20</sup> *And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.* (<sup>ESV</sup>2 Chronicles 30:20)

Why were these people not punished with death as was Uzzah? What was different about this situation and that of King David. I submit that there are at least two reasons:

1. Whereas David failed to consult the Torah to see what YHVH said in regards to what he was wanting to do, Hezekiah knew the Torah and weighed the consequences of his actions against the possible outcome of what he wanted to do.<sup>7</sup>
2. Uzzah was a part of something that was in not prescribed by God (God did not instruct David to retrieve the Ark) and he dared to touch God's presence, but turning your heart to YHVH is what He wants us constantly to do.

In essence, what the people were doing, especially those from the northern tribes, was a fulfillment of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple:

*. . . if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* (<sup>ESV</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Hezekiah, like his great – great . . . grandfather Solomon, understood the heart of God, and because he did, he was able to act boldly on behalf of the people and the restoration of Israel.

What does this have to do with us today, especially during this Passover season?

Like we said at the beginning of this teaching – “YHVH is calling His people back”. Many non-Jewish Israelites are beginning to turn to God. They are forsaking the Mount Gerizim and are turning to Mount Zion. Some of those Israelites wish to keep Passover simply because it's a “Jewish” thing. On the other hand, there are those who want to do so because it's a covenant thing . . . they desire more than anything to be counted as a “son of the covenant”. Unfortunately, for some of those who diligently want to seek and serve God, their father failed to give them that sign of the covenant that t YHVH commanded to be done on the eighth day – the circumcision of the male child. Because of this sin of their father, they feel that they are unable to eat the Passover – and so they should – the Torah is very explicit in this regard<sup>8</sup>.

Who would YHVH be more pleased with sitting at His Passover table? The circumcised religious tourist? Or the uncircumcised pilgrim who diligently seeks Him? I think the answer is obvious. I would suggest that anyone who is in this position, who has followed the admonition of Moses to “circumcise the foreskin of your heart”<sup>9</sup> will find atonement if they lay their heart out before YHVH in humble prayer. Then take the next year and rectify the problem.

To conclude our story of this very special Passover, those from Judah and Israel who were covered by Hezekiah's prayer didn't take their atonement lightly. The text goes on to show that they continued observing the Days of Unleavened bread for an extra seven days, after which they went throughout the land destroying the pagan altars, idols, and pillars. Then to show their gratitude and allegiance to YHVH, they began to bring their tithes and offerings to Jerusalem as prescribed by the Torah. In essence, there was a restoration of sorts – a restoration of Israel and Judah, even if it was for just a little while.

As the Passover season approaches, let us remember that we are an exiled people who are attempting to join back with our brother Judah. We're not going to do everything perfect, but if our heart is truly toward following YHVH and His Torah, He will pardon our lack of knowledge and our lack of preparation. As our Rabbi Yeshua reminded His critics after healing a sick person on the Sabbath . . .

<sup>13</sup> *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."* (<sup>NKJ</sup>Matthew 9:13)

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Chronicles 31:30-21

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 12

<sup>9</sup> Deut. 10:16