

The Last Day of Unleavened Bread has special significance in God's festival plan. In obedience to the law given by God to Moses, for six days, we avoid food products that include leavening agents. Let's rehearse those scriptures once again –

^{ESV} **Exodus 12:15-17, 19-20** Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. ¹⁷ And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. . . . ¹⁹ For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. ²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread."

This thought is continued in Exodus 13:6-7, and then God reiterates why we are to do this –

^{ESV} **Exodus 12:33-34; 37-39** The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." ³⁴ So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders . . . ³⁷ And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. ³⁹ And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

It is believed that on this day, the Israelites found themselves boxed in with mountains on both side, the advancing Egyptian army behind them, and the sea blocking their only escape route. We know the story (Ex. 14:21-28). God told Moses to move forward, and when they did, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and it parted, becoming a wall on both sides and a dry plain below them. That night, all the Israelites passed through the sea, followed by the Egyptian army. As the last Israelite stepped on the eastern bank, God instructed Moses to once again stretch his hand out over the sea, and he caused the walls of water to collapse and the Egyptian army was engulfed by the sea.

It was at this point that God said of Israel –

^{ESV} **Exodus 14:31** Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

As we read the Exodus story – from Exodus to Deuteronomy - we see a people whose faith rose and fell like the waves of the sea. At one point they were high, then shortly after, they were down. When their faith was high, they could look up in the sky and see a pillar of fire leading the way by day, and a special cloud leading them by night. When their faith was low, they could still look up in the sky and see that same pillar of fire and that same cloud. They were always there.

Paul talked about these ups and downs in his letter to the Corinthians. He said –

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 10:1-6; 11-12** I want you to know, brothers, ¹ that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in

the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did . . .

¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

How can we keep ourselves from falling? We do so by keeping our eyes and thoughts focused on our calling. This study focuses on the patriarch Joseph . . . not necessarily about his life, but about his bones, and the focus they provided the children of Israel.

Going back to the 'Faith' chapter in Hebrews (Hebrews 11), it makes this interesting statement about Joseph.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 11:22** By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

This is the only statement of faith attributed to Joseph. You would think that the faith of Joseph would be portrayed by his refusal to succumb to the temptations of Potiphar's wife; or maybe his willingness to stand before Pharaoh and interpret his dream. But that's not the case. In the eyes of the writer of Hebrews, his greatest act of faith is when he asked his brothers to vow that they would take his bones out of Egypt. Let's read the account –

^{ESV} **Genesis 50:24-26** ²⁴ And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." ²⁶ So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Like his father Jacob, Joseph wanted his final resting place to be in Canaan – the Promised Land. So why didn't he instruct his brothers to do as he had done for his father Jacob? You will recall¹ that Jacob commanded his sons to bury him at a very specific place in the land of Canaan. In fact he made it clear that it was the Cave of Machpelah, it was the place where his parents and grandparents were buried, and the place his wife was buried. He stated where it was located, and that it had been properly purchased from the sons of Heth,

He went into great detail as to where he wanted them . . . no – COMMANDED then to bury him . . . and it was not EGYPT.

Why is it then that Joseph did not command his brothers to do the same? Joseph was second in command in Egypt, and even though there may have been another Pharaoh by the time Joseph died, it's very likely that Joseph still held a place of honor in the eyes of the Egyptian people. Surely Joseph could have made funeral arrangements before he died which would have permitted his brothers to carry his body back to Canaan as well.

But he did not. He allowed himself to be buried in Egypt.

As we look at the story of Joseph, we find that he spent most of his life as exiled in Egypt, first as a slave to Potiphar, then in Pharaoh's prison. Even after being discovered by Pharaoh and then elevated to a very high position in the kingdom, Joseph was still an exile. Except when he went to bury his father did Joseph ever return to Canaan – and then only for a short time.

¹ Genesis 49:29-33

Though Joseph was second in command only to Pharaoh, it appears that Joseph was still in bondage. You will notice that Joseph had to ask Pharaoh's permission to leave Egypt to bury Jacob.

^{NKJ} **Genesis 50:5** 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.' "

So Joseph recognized that he and his brothers, though blessed with wealth, prestige, and living in the best part of Egypt, were – to some degree – already in bondage.

So Joseph told his brothers – made them take an oath – that when they were freed from the bondage, they were to take his bones with them.

Joseph learned early in life that he had a special purpose. He had dreams were his parents as well as his brothers would eventually bow down to him, and except for his mother – he saw that happen. It's apparent that Joseph knew about the promises made to his great-grandfather Abraham; promises that were passed down to his grandfather Isaac and to his father Jacob.

Joseph witnessed the promises made to his children – Manasseh and Ephraim – promises that stood above those of his brothers. These promises were prophecies of his descendants becoming a great people. Then he heard his father say –

^{ESV} **Genesis 48:21** . . . "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers.

So Joseph knew, from the dreams and from the words of his father, that he, his brothers, and their descendants would return to the land of Canaan.

Joseph never blamed his brothers for what happened to him. He came to know that God had put him in a position where he could preserve the lives of his brothers so that they could not only survive the famine, but could also return to the land.

But they did not return to the land in his lifetime, so on his deathbed he told them –

^{ESV} **Genesis 50:25** - "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

What Joseph gave his brothers was hope. As young men, they had heard Joseph's dreams, and they saw them fulfilled. They, like their younger brother, knew the promises made to their father, and they knew that humanly, Joseph was the only one that could make it come to pass. But Joseph died, and they were still in Egypt.

Joseph's bones remained in Egypt for decades. It's quite likely that a monument was built and his coffin was placed in it, just as it was for George Washington, the "Father of Our Country"; and if you have ever been to Mount Vernon, when you stand there looking at his tomb, you get the feeling of awe that you're standing so close to a man whose courage, wisdom, and strength helped fashion what became the greatest nation on earth.

It's apparent that the brothers passed their oath concerning Joseph's bones on to their children, and the children did likewise. Those bones became a token of hope for his brothers and their descendants. They were right there, in a box, in a tomb, or buried in the ground. They could not see them, but they knew they were there; and they had vowed to take them with them when they returned to the land . . . **WHEN THEY RETURNED TO THE LAND!. THEY WERE GOING TO RETURN TO THE LAND.**

As the Exodus story begins, Moses, along with his brother Aaron, are returning to Egypt from the land of Median. The first thing they did was to meet with the leaders of Israel to tell them what God had told Moses, then they showed the elders the signs that God had given. Then it says –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 4:31** ³¹ So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

I believe they bowed their heads and worshipped because their hope was about to become real. For years they had passed on the oath concerning Joseph's bones, and they knew that those bones were associated with freedom. The time of their visitation was near, and Joseph's bones were near. Though they never really saw them, they knew they were real, and they knew where they were.

After the Passover, as they were being thrust out of their homes, and as they saw their bread go flat, the Israelites knew that the first order of business was to retrieve Joseph's bones. They had passed down the oath from generation to generation for nearly 300 years as a token of hope that they would eventually be allowed to return to the land of Canaan. In their heart, they knew it would happen, because everything Joseph had said – did happen! And now it was happening.

The gathering of his bones might very likely have taken place on the day of the wave-omer offering. They collected the bones, then carried them to the Red Sea, then to Mount Sinai. For 40 years they carried them through the wilderness. They – along with the Pillar of Fire, the Cloud by day, the Rock that brought forth water, and the daily manna – became a sign and a token of hope for the Hebrew people, but even though they brought the bones out of Egypt, that generation never carried them into the promised land. The job of carrying his bones across the Jordan and eventually burying them was left to the younger generation..

Those of us living in this age have our own "Bones of Joseph". They are the bones of Messiah ben Yoseph², or as we know him – Messiah Yeshua. He has called us carry His message of the restoration of the Kingdom to our communities, our nation, and ultimately the world³. Though we – like the Israelites - have never seen the actual bones, we know they are there. We have evidence of them in:

- The Historical Jesus

Though they differ about the beliefs and teachings of Jesus, virtually all scholars of antiquity agree that Jesus existed.⁴ The evidence is both long established and widespread. He is mentioned in the writings of many ancient Jewish as well as Roman historians.⁵

- Fulfilled Prophecy

The prophecies pertaining to Israel in the 'end times' or 'latter days' seem to be coming to pass. The migrations of the 'Ten Lost Tribes' are being researched and confirmed by both Jewish and Christian scholars and they all point to the United States of America. Over half of the worlds'

² 'Messiah ben Yoseph' is Hebrew for 'Messiah, the son of Joseph'. In short, there was a view among the Qumran community and first century Judaism (John 11:49-52) that there would be either two Messiahs – one to fulfill the messianic 'suffering servant' expectations Zech. 9:9 and the other to fulfill the 'conquering king' expectations of Zech. 14:4-9 - or that one Messiah would fill both roles - but at two advents. 'Messiah ben Joseph' was the name given to the 'suffering servant' messiah because the patriarch Joseph (Gen. 30:22-24) suffered for the benefit of his brothers and ultimately saved them from starvation. 'Messiah ben David' was the name given to the 'conquering king' messiah for obvious reasons. It is interesting to note that Yeshua was both the son of Joseph (via adoption) and the son of David (by lineage through His mother).

³ Matthew 24:14

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jesus (10/29/2019)

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/14/what-is-the-historical-evidence-that-jesus-christ-lived-and-died> (10/29/2019)

Jews live in the USA⁶, nearly twice as many as live in Israel. But this does not include the non-Jewish Israelites that live in the USA as evidenced by their belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Other than ancient Israel, the USA is the only nation founded on Judeo-Christian principles, and we are the only nation that has been blessed in the way God foretold the prophets of old.

In addition, the recent trend by those who associate with the 'Torah-Christian', 'Messianic Jewish', and 'Hebrew Roots' movements appear to be the beginning of the fulfillment of the restoration of God's way to the exiled 'Lost Ten Tribes'⁷. Just as the scripture has said –

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 29:18** In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Seeing that the evidence of Yeshua is here and is continuing to grow, are we going to fulfill the call to carry His bones, or are we going to be like ancient Israel, who even though they brought Joseph's bones out of Egypt, failed to get them into the Promised Land?

The ending verses of the book of Joshua provide an interesting note about the bones of Joseph. The placement of the text seems to indicate that the Israelites finally buried his bones after the Promised Land was captured; and by doing so, secured an inheritance for the descendants of Joseph -

^{ESV} **Joshua 24:31-32** Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel. ³² As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

Could God be saying that the end-time inheritance of the modern-day descendants of Joseph, those who descended from Manasseh and Ephraim – those who the prophets call “Ephraim”⁸ - may not be secure until they too carry the bones of Joseph into the Promised Land and set them in their place?

As we saw earlier, Paul said the Exodus story was given to us so that we might not be caught up in pride and the desire for evil. Therefore, we must keep our minds focused on our calling, continue to grow in understanding of our Messiah, and to build faith in God and His promises, so that when the time comes when we make it to the Promised Land and are finally able to place Joseph's bones in the ground, God can say to us –

^{ESV} **Matthew 25:21** . . . 'Well done, good and faithful servant.¹ You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Shalom Alecheim

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population_by_country#Major_Jewish_population_centers_worldwide (10/29/2019)

⁷ Isaiah 52:1-7

⁸ prophetically, the 'Lost Ten Tribes' are called “Ephraim” (Ps. 78:9-11; Is. 7:17, 11:13; Jer. 7:15; Ezek. 37; Hosea 5:13-14)