

A few years back, I got a phone call from a woman in Pennsylvania who said something to the effect that “as a result of the presidential election, she had come to see that our nation was in trouble and so she began to search the Bible for answers to what was going on”. As we continued to talk and she began to reveal more of the background for her Biblical research, and stated that she’s come to understand that Christians should be observing the Biblical festivals – or what many call “the Jewish festivals”, and that a search for information on those festivals is what led her to our Season of Our Joy web site and her decision to call me.

What is happening to that woman is what is happening throughout the world. God is beginning to open the eyes of His people – a people who were not a people, but are now becoming “am elohim” - the people of God. As the scripture reveals -

^{ESV} **Isaiah 42:6-8** "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ I am the LORD; that is my name . . .

As His people are beginning to be drawn back, they tend to want to begin their journey by examining the Biblical festivals. Some start with the weekly Sabbath, but many more begin with the most popular of all “Jewish festivals”, and that is Passover.

Today I want to present an introduction to Passover. I’ll call it a “Passover Primer” and cover some of the basics of Passover. For some this may be new information, and for others it will be a refresher.

We’re going to answer three questions in regards to Passover:

- What is it?
- Should we observe it?
- How should we observe it?

So let’s get started . . .

What is Passover?

In the simplest of terms “Passover is the event that led to the redemption of God’s people”. To many, especially those raised Jewish, that event was the Passover in Egypt. To those who were raised as Christians, that event was the death of Jesus on the stake. To others – especially those who consider themselves to be “Hebrew Roots”, the Passover theme is extended into the future – to a ‘greater exodus’ of God’s people from the nations back to the way of God and the land.

The Passover event was just one part of a series of events that would ultimately lead to Israel becoming God’s people and living in the land of Israel. God had told Moses -

^{ESV} **Exodus 6:6-8** Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will **bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians**, and I will **deliver you from slavery** to them, and I will **redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment**. ⁷ I will **take you to be my people**, and I will **be your God**, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will **bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham**, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will **give it to you for a possession**. I am the LORD."



Though many plagues lead up to Israel being redeemed, The event that brought it to a head was the Passover, and the actual Passover event was when God covered the homes of those who followed the instructions of Moses. Those instructions are found in Exodus 12, and they contain at least 12 specific instructions -

^{ESV} **Exodus 12:1-11** The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. **It shall be the first month of the year for you.** ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that **on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb** according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; **according to what each can eat you shall make your count** for the lamb. ⁵ Your **lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old.** You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall **keep it until the fourteenth day of this month**, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall **kill their lambs at twilight.** ⁷ "Then they shall **take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.** ⁸ They shall **eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.** ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, **its head with its legs and its inner parts.** ¹⁰ And you shall **let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.** ¹¹ **In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.** And you shall **eat it in haste.** It is the LORD's Passover.

We will not discuss the particulars of each instruction, but we can see that they are very specific and detailed . . . it had to be done exactly as prescribed. But the killing of the lamb was not the actual Passover event. The event after which this festival is named is when God "passed over" the Israelites. The text continues –

^{ESV} **Exodus 12:12-13** For I will **pass through** the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will **pass over** you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

The text I've highlighted is very important in understanding what happened that night. The phrase "pass through" comes from the Hebrew word "abar" (עָבַר – 5674) which means to "transition through". In other words God was going to go from home to home in Egypt to see if there was blood on the doorpost. If not, he was going to keep moving. The second phrase – "pass over" is from a totally different Hebrew word; the word "pesach" (פָּסַח – 6452) which means to "halt, go limp, become lame". Unlike the first phrase, where God just continues on if he does not see the blood on the doorpost, if He does see the blood, He halts – stops. Why does He stop? Because He is protecting that house from the destroyer. This is made more clear in verse 23 –

^{ESV} **Exodus 12:23** For the LORD will pass (*abar* – continue on) through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over (*pesach* – halt, stop) the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.

Thus the Passover event is when God protected His people from the destroyer, and this protection led to their redemption, which led to their salvation in the Red Sea.



The Role of the Lamb

What part did the lamb play in the Passover? It was the Passover victim¹, the one that supplied the blood. Like we saw, the instructions pertaining to it were very specific:

- It had to be separated from the flock
- It had to be 1 year old
- It could not have any blemishes or broken bones²

So it is no stretch to associate the original Passover Lamb with the Lamb of God – Messiah Yeshua who was separated from His people³, who died while the Passover lambs were being slain on the afternoon of the 14th day of the first month⁴, and who - because He was already dead, did not have His legs broken as did those who were crucified with him. In fact, the Apostle Paul makes a clear connection –

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 5:7** Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Yeshua's sacrifice was a clear parallel to the original Passover sacrifice. Just as the blood of the original Passover victim covering the doorpost lead to the redemption of the Israelite slaves, the blood of Messiah Yeshua lead to our redemption.

Though the first Passover lead to the almost immediate redemption and exodus of ancient Israel, there was no Exodus associated with Yeshua's Passover sacrifice. Instead, that Exodus is yet to come. It is prophesied in the book of Jeremiah -

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 16:14-15** "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,'¹⁵ but 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.

According to this prophecy, the Israelites exodus from Egypt will pale in significance to the exodus that is yet to come. Though the first exodus is an event that is known throughout the world, it's quite likely that with the help of modern technology, all the world will actually see the coming exodus take place right before their eyes. Continuing in Jeremiah –

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 32:37-41** Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety.³⁸ And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.³⁹ I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts that they may not turn from me.⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

Just as the first exodus came about as a result of God remembering his covenant with Abraham, the second exodus is a result of the New Covenant, the everlasting covenant that was sealed by the blood of the Lamb of God, Messiah Yeshua –

¹ Ex. 34:25 – the phrase “sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover” is from the words “zebach” (2077); “chag” (2282); and “pecach” (6453). Though “zebach” clearly means “sacrifice”, the word “chag” can also mean “sacrifice” or “victim”. See Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon, ISBN 0-8010-3736-0; pg. 260

² Ex. 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Ps. 34:20

³ Heb. 7:26

⁴ John 18:28



^{ESV} **Luke 22:19-20** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

For Jews Only?

Who then should observe Passover. For nearly 2000 years, Passover – as well as all of God's festivals were considered to be "Jewish" festivals. But is that really the case? No it's not! All of the festivals, including Passover, are "God's festivals".

^{ESV} **Leviticus 23:1** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts."

These are not the 'feasts of the Jews'; they are 'the feasts of YHVH' . . . they are His festivals, and He gave them to all those who follow His commandments – the Torah –

^{ESV} **1 John 3:21-24** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴ Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Though some will say that the festivals have been "done away with", that is not true. In fact, the apostles began their work on one of God's festivals – Shavuot, or as it's known in Christian culture – Pentecost –

^{ESV} **Acts 2:1** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

There are several other places in the New Testament that indicate the Apostles continued to observe the festivals until they died.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival . . .

1 Corinthians 16:7-8 For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost . . .

Of course, who can argue the fact that if Yeshua observed the festivals, we should follow His example and do likewise.

^{ESV} **John 10:27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

So who should observe Passover? All those who follow the God of Israel, His Son – Messiah Yeshua, and His Torah. Does that include children? Yes it does, and we'll discuss that later in this teaching.



How Should we Observe Passover?

That's the big question. With various questions on the calendar, whether or not Yeshua was observing the Passover on the night He was betrayed, "Jewish" vs. "Christian" Passover, and so many other questions, it's hard to know how one should observe Passover today.

For our family, my wife and I decided we would follow the strict interpretation of the Torah where it clearly says -

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 4:1** "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ² You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.

To me, this command is so profound that I believe it bears repeating, and it is repeated by Moses in the same book –

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 12:32** "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

What this is saying is that you, your neighbor, or your pastor . . . NO ONE can add to or take away from God's law. Not Paul, not James, not Peter, not even Yeshua, for to do so would be breaking the Torah! This applies to all of God's Torah including the Passover. Therefore, if we cannot find a Passover instruction in the Torah, it is not commanded.

On the other hand, the scripture does indicate that we must at times make 'judgment calls' in regards to our Passover observance.

^{ESV} **Numbers 9:3** On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it (the Passover) at its appointed time; according to all its statutes and all its rules you shall keep it."

In this passage, the Hebrew word for "rules" is "mishpat" (מִשְׁפָּט – 4931) which means "judgments", and what it is saying is that there will be times that a person will have to make a judgment call in regards to how to observe this special event. The reason for this is quite clear. It had now been nearly a year since the first Passover and the Israelite's release from bondage. Because things were so much different than they were a year earlier, they had questions: "We can still offer a sacrificial lamb, but where do we spread the blood . . . after all, we're living in tents and we don't have doorposts?; "do we still eat it in haste since we know we are not any longer wanting to flee? They probably had many other questions as well.

Such is our situation today. We are 3500 years removed from that first Passover, and most of the instructions given seem to pertain only to that first Passover. So what do we do? We do as much as we can within the context of the Torah, and when we find gaps, we can develop traditions.

For instance, the scripture says to gather in groups of about the size to eat a year old lamb in one sitting (Exodus 12:3). A quick search on the internet indicates that a mature lamb would feed approximately 30-45 people, but we're talking about a young lamb, so maybe 15 to 25 people. You have to use judgment in making that decision.

What about actually sacrificing a lamb? Are we able to do that? The scripture indicates that you may not, and it's all based on the fact that after the sin of the golden calf, the responsibility of offering sacrifices was given to the Levitical Priests. What's more, God limited the sacrifices to only being performed at the Temple in Jerusalem.



^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 16:5-6** You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, ⁶ but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt.

That place is the Temple in Jerusalem, which is no more. Therefore, we cannot offer a Passover sacrifice today. So what do we do? The Jews have instituted the tradition of putting a bone of a lamb on the table to symbolize the Passover lamb. Many Christians who keep Passover typically recognize the fact that the original Passover lamb represented the true Lamb of God – Messiah Yeshua, and honor Him and His sacrifice with bread and wine. There again, it's a judgment call coupled with tradition.

One aspect of Passover that is often missed in Christian circles, but is very important to the Jewish people is the fact that every Passover is a memorial of the first Passover, and that telling the story of the original Passover is the main focus of the evening. The scripture points this out very clearly –

^{ESV} **Exodus 10:1** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ² and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

This scripture shows that the entire exodus/Passover event was for the purpose of telling each generation of Israelites about how God did marvelous things in order to secure their freedom. This is a story that is to never be forgotten, and observant Jewish homes do this by following an orderly telling of the story based on what is called a Haggadah – a small booklet that follows the Passover story. The Haggadah is written in such a way that it involves the children so that they stay awake and alert through the entire story.

We could go on and on in regards to how to properly observe Passover, but the bottom line is that we do what we can scripturally do, then use judgment in regards to what traditions we add in order to fulfill the purpose of the night –

^{ESV} **Exodus 13:3** . . . "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place . . .

Shalom Alecheim