

## Passover

The name of the festival, Pesach in Hebrew, passing over or protection, is derived from the instructions given to Moses by God (Ex. 6:6-8). Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel, Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD (Ex. 6:6-8).

Passover is the time of beginnings for Israel. This festival ushers in the coming of spring on the Jewish calendar. It is celebrated on the fourteenth<sup>1</sup> day of Abib (the first month of the Jewish religious calendar, later called Nisan). Each of the three pilgrimage festivals Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles has an agricultural basis as well as an historical significance. Many different things are celebrated during Passover. A few of these include: the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the growing season; the new lambing time, and the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt during Passover.

It cannot be overemphasized as to how foundational Passover is in God's eternal redemption plan. Only Nisan can be the first month in God's calendar. Though other cycles and other aspects of life in the LORD are important, it is the sacrifice of the Lamb that gives it all meaning. Except for the sacrifice of the Passover and the blood on the doorposts, Israel would have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians. The promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have then become void. With no Passover sacrifice and with no blood on the doorposts, then no Torah could have been given and no other celebrations could have followed. Apart from the sacrifice of the Passover and the blood on the door posts, there would have been no basis for Messiah, our Passover, to be sacrificed on the anniversary of that momentous occasion. We would have no hope and remain dead in our sins; however, the command was obeyed and deliverance was accomplished. Indeed, for us, this is most certainly the first of all the months, the first month of the year, truly the real beginning of all spiritual life (Michael 1996).

God directs parents, this special night of the year, to take on the role of teacher, and pass down His story of the exodus from Egypt to future generations. This ceremony not only looks back to the miraculous story of God delivering His people, but it also presents the promise of Messiah's death and resurrection. It is an exciting experience centering on a mixture of ritual foods. The matzah, bitter herbs, wine, and the rest, provide a lasting link through the march of history.

## Israel's Redemption from Egypt (Exodus 1:1-18:27)

The Old Testament story of Passover has more light, more splendor, more vividness, and a richer application to life than any other story in the book of Exodus. Moses and his brother Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him that the Lord said to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites, even for a brief visit to the desert to worship their God. In fact, he made life for the Israelite slaves even worse. Moses had warned Pharaoh that God would send a series of plagues upon Egypt unless the people were freed.

God sent the plagues to show the people that He is the one true God. He confronted the things that the Egyptians called gods. The ten plagues were righteous plagues, and justly inflicted upon the Egyptians because each plague had something to do with the false gods that the Egyptians worshipped. God makes those false things that we worship a burden to us.

The word plague is from the Hebrew word oth, which means "sign". The Egyptians believed in magic. They were always trying to override the laws of nature to perform their "tricks" God used the laws of nature to bring about His signs and wonders.

The entire episode of the plagues is supposed to have happened within eight to ten months. Each of the plagues spoke as a sign to the Egyptians, showing them that He is greater than their so-called gods. The first three plagues affected all the people, even the Hebrews. The next three plagues were much more intense and only happened to the Egyptians (I will put a division between my people and thy people v. 23). Before each plague, God commanded Moses and Aaron to warn Pharaoh, Let My people go or I [God] will bring a plague upon you. Before each plague, for three weeks, Moses warned Pharaoh. The actual plague lasted one week.

## Seder

During the Passover celebration, Jews and Christians remember this great event by eating special foods associated with the bitterness of slavery and the sweetness of freedom. The entire meal, called the seder, is eaten as the story of Israel's freedom is told. Everything in the Seder is directed toward the prime command from the Bible: And thou shalt shew thy son in that day saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt (Exod. 13:8). See a Messianic Seder Process in the next chapter.

## Redemption

The great miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea is the climax of the departure

from Egypt and the inspiring wonder that forged a group of slaves into a nation. The redemption from Egypt is not only that of Israel but also a salvation by faith in general. The celebration of redemption from Egypt will be a pattern for salvation from all other evil.

During this God-ordained night we celebrate the doctrines of our salvation. Thus, like ancient Israel, we are sovereignty brought to the edge of the "sea" with no hope except to trust His deliverance and to follow Him. We marvel at His overwhelming sufficiency. Like ancient Israel, when we trust Him for deliverance and walk through the "sea" with Him, we end up singing and dancing on the other side. That's Pesach! (Berkowitz 1996)