

CHAPTER 11

YESHUA'S NEW COVENANT PASSOVER SEDER AND THE ANCIENT TEACHINGS AND SYMBOLS

You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests.

—God

WHAT ARE THE biblical elements of the New Testament Passover service? Should the evening service accompany the Passover meal called the Seder or Lord's Supper? Or should there only be an evening service wherein the new symbols Yeshua instituted are taken with some basic instruction? Must Passover be kept together as an official church function when at all possible, or is it also a family service? What is the biblical order of the Passover service? Did God have children partake of the Passover?

Do you know what God's Word really says regarding these questions? What teachings are appropriate for the Passover service? How do the Old Testament and New

Testament symbols complement one another, and what do the symbols teach us?

PASSOVER, A FAMILY AFFAIR

Originally, the Passover lamb was killed by each head of household. God's promise was to make Israel a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). Therefore, at Passover, each head of household acted as a priest for his family by picking out a perfect yearling lamb ahead of time and then sacrificing that lamb for his family. Exodus 12:21 says, "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'" (emphasis added).

The Passover sacrifice was uniquely different from the general sacrifices and the other festival sacrifices, which required the priests, exclusively, to perform the sacrificial duties and wave offerings. Except Passover, all other sacrifices were forbidden from public implementation (Lev. 23:11–21; 1 Sam. 13:12–14). But the Passover lamb was killed by each head of household. Further, although these holy days share certain common principles of humility, repentance, and coming out of the world's sinful lifestyle, they each also have a unique purpose and were originally kept as contiguous but separate festivals.

Each male head of family was responsible to be ready for the Passover in whichever region he happened to live. Passover was a family time when fathers would share the meanings of the Passover symbols with their children and willing neighbors. It was an assembly of

men, women, and children and of families, friends, and neighbors. But it was not generally a gathering into one location of whole, large congregations. The other Sabbaths and feasts have an extra emphasis on convening in larger assemblies or holy convocations that Passover does not have.

After Passover, each of the seven annual high days of the remaining six feasts had in their descriptive commands the words “holy convocation” accompanying the corresponding high day (Lev. 23:7–8, 21, 24, 27, 35–36). You will notice Passover is not among them. This is because Passover was not kept by convening a meeting of the whole congregation in the same way the other festivals were. Passover was usually kept with extended families and neighbors all gathering together according to the number of people needed to completely eat a lamb. In Exodus 12:4, we read, “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 the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb.”

The size of the lamb limited and dictated the size of the Passover gathering in each home. In this way, each head of household would participate in the Passover telling and service (the Haggadah) that took place during and after the meal with the senior patriarch present usually overseeing the service. It was a time to worship in a close-knit group sizable enough to require preparation, but small enough to be intimate and personal—just like Yeshua’s Passover with His

disciples (which likely included many of the disciples' family members, including any children).

Each father or head of household had his part in the opportunity and responsibility to learn how to act as a priest, on behalf of his own family and friends, before God. This statute is a partial preparation for and fulfillment of God's words, "you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). This remains God's purpose for His people in His coming kingdom (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Peter also taught this important principle to the New Testament "Israel of God": "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

THE WOMAN'S ROLE

Women also have an important role to play as the matriarch of their families, in teaching their children and learning how to worship God the way He instructs us. Though the women were not circumcised in the flesh, they were to be circumcised in their hearts (Deut. 10:16). God created both men and women in His image "as heirs together" (1 Peter 3:7). Godly women and their children are just as sanctified as godly men and their children (1 Cor. 7:14). The men were to pick out the lambs to be eaten by their "households" (Ex. 12:4). Obviously, that would include the women as much as the men. God's plan is that the husband and wife work together as one in leading their children in a godly life (Mal. 2:15).

Paul said that the mature women are to be “teachers of good things” and “that they admonish the younger women to love their husbands and love their children” (Titus 2:3–4). All of God’s laws apply to both men and women, young and old, as Deuteronomy 31:12 shows: “Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law.”

God’s command is that women also learn how to “carefully observe all the words of this law,” and certainly that includes Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. While, biblically, women did not have the leading teaching roles and were not to usurp authority over the men (1 Tim. 2:12), surely we can all see that women did have an important role in the worshipping of God on His Sabbaths, holy days, and other occasions—especially in the home. Women also play an important role in helping set the tone for Sabbaths and feasts. After the salvation afforded through the Passover and deliverance from Egypt, Miriam led the other women in organized singing and blessing of God’s name before the whole congregation of Israel:

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: “Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”

—Ex. 15:20–21

While the men are biblically responsible to lead in the Passover Seder, it is usually not without the supportive assistance and contributions of godly women.

WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN?

Passover was a commanded festival for all who had taken the covenant of circumcision. It was to be kept by households. A “household” includes women and children, boys and girls. Gentiles could take Passover with Israel provided they were also circumcised.

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. But every man’s servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. *All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.* And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For *no uncircumcised person shall eat it.* One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

—Ex. 12:43–49, emphasis added

Notice the words “All the congregation of Israel shall keep it” in verse 47. Clearly, boys and girls were part of

the congregation of Israel. Passover was commanded to be eaten by all those who were circumcised; but Passover was also commanded to be eaten by the female family members of those who were circumcised, hence God's words, "All the congregation of Israel shall keep it."

Remember, the male Hebrew children were circumcised at only eight days of age.

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

—Gen. 17:12

And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

—Lev. 12:3

Those circumcised Hebrew boys grew up obeying God's command for them to keep Passover. Clearly, children do not have understanding at only eight days of age. Their understanding was to come later through their observance of Passover. They were to be taught about the Passover ordinances from their parents as they grew up keeping it.

So it shall be, *when your son asks you in time to come, saying, "What is this?"* that you shall say to him, "By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt."

—Ex. 13:14–15, emphasis added

Baptism is given as a New Testament type of circumcision for the Gentiles. Notice:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

—Col. 2:11–12

Since God commanded Passover for the circumcised, and since baptism is a spiritual type for circumcision in the New Testament, some churches have taught that only baptized adults could take the Passover. On the surface, this might seem reasonable. Indeed, this author was taught and I once accepted that Passover had no room for children. Children were not to be present, and suffered for what they felt was a form of rejection by God and their church. Everyone took their children to a babysitter's house Passover night. Visitors were also discouraged from coming, and if they were allowed to be present, they were forbidden from partaking in any of the symbols if they were not baptized by a "church accredited" minister. Since none of us wants to be pharisaical, so let's avoid being pharisaical by adding restrictive rules to God's Word or by over jurisdiction. May the Lord have mercy upon us all and free us with His truth (John 8:32).

Preventing unbaptized children from keeping the Passover with their families may seem scriptural to

some, but this is usually because they have limited understanding of Torah and have thus been able to be misled by considering only a few obscure verses out of context, to form their Passover beliefs. But upon closer examination, such a belief clearly goes contrary to God's instruction that Passover was to be kept by circumcised children. Further, that limiting belief ignores another New Testament teaching from Paul—that the children of believers are sanctified: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; *otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy*" (1 Cor. 7:14).

Each person will have to follow his or her own conscience in these matters. However, one thing is clear: God commanded Passover to be taught to and kept by Israel's children—both boys and girls—from ancient times. The only examples that have been used in an attempt to keep children out of Passover (which in essence would be a change in God's law) are a couple of New Testament verses that show baptism being a type of a covenant with God similar to that of circumcision. What Paul meant to be unifying principles bringing Jewish and Gentile families together for Passover and life has been misapplied and made into a means of dividing the children away from God and away from their parents. What a terrible misunderstanding. But it does not have to continue to be so.

Consider this: The early New Testament circumcised Jewish believers who accepted Yeshua as the Messiah,

and who had sanctified children who had kept Passover many times but were perhaps still too young to be baptized—were these children now suddenly forbidden to keep Passover? Did these children now suddenly need to be dropped off at the babysitter's before their parents could keep Passover? Or were they allowed to be present, but suddenly no longer allowed to participate in something they had done many times before? Did Christ come to change the law of Passover? Consider His answer to that question: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17–18).

The children are sanctified by the baptized and believing parents. The command for Jewish children to be circumcised on the eighth day continues to be binding in New Testament dispensation after Yeshua's crucifixion. Notice:

And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We

have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and *that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.*

—Acts 21:20–24, emphasis added

Paul was falsely accused of teaching the Jews that they did not need to circumcise their children anymore. To counter this accusation, Paul took a very public vow to disprove his accusers. God inspired this event to be recorded in the book of Acts for us all to benefit from.

Paul's public vow clarifies that God's command for circumcised children to eat the Passover Seder in New Testament times remains, as has been the Jews' custom and heritage for millennia. Would someone then suggest that those Jewish children who are commanded to eat the Passover with unleavened bread and wine be forbidden to continue to take these symbols, with the deeper understanding that their Jewish forefather (Jesus) brought to us all? That would be an unscriptural assumption and an egregious error.

With the parents' consent, children ought not to be forbidden to partake of the bread and a ceremonial amount of wine and to be taught the depth of their meanings.

It has been taught by some that for a young unbaptized member to partake of the Passover would be to take the Passover in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27),

for he or she may not fully understand the importance of the evening. But Paul's warning to the Corinthians against taking the Passover in an unworthy manner was referring to their being drunk, gluttonous, and selfish at previous Passovers (1 Cor. 11:21), and our children are to learn through our instruction and by their doing. Paul was not warning the Corinthians about bringing their families with children to Passover, but about their rude conduct at Passover. So let's not misapply Paul's words to divide families at Passover.

The Passover Seder has, from ancient times, been an important teaching tool for children. During the Passover meal, it has long been customary (and scripturally so) for a child to ask questions about the meaning and origin of Passover during the Seder. As the father and mother answer those questions, all the other children present also hear the answers. This custom is based on passages from the Torah. Let's examine a couple of them, beginning with Exodus 12:

And it shall be, when your children say to you, "What do you mean by this service?" that you shall say, "It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households." So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

—Ex. 12:26–27

God intended for Passover to be kept by children as an important teaching feast for them, to instruct them

in the correct knowledge and worship structure of the Most High. To forbid children and young adults from keeping Passover because they are not yet baptized makes no more sense than it would for the men of Israel to have prevented their wives from keeping Passover with them because they were not circumcised!

Moses added this instruction regarding teaching children God's testimonies, statutes, and judgments, and how they relate to the Passover:

When your son asks you in time to come, saying, "What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your son: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

—Deut. 6:20–21

Here God tells us as parents to teach our children the connection between God's testimonies, statutes, and judgments with the freedom God gives us all, beginning with the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover marked the beginning of Israel's journey out of slavery, and Pentecost gave them the basis to be a free people with a just law from a loving Father.

Have you realized that God associates His Sabbaths and holy feasts with freedom? Misguided teachers call God's laws and feasts "bondage"; God calls them just the opposite. This is just one of many important lessons we are to teach our children through the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Let's do it.

A CLEAN, UNLEAVENED HOUSE AND RESPECTFUL CHILDREN

If one is not careful, it is possible to partake of the Passover in an unworthy manner by allowing a chaotic household atmosphere in which the Passover is being kept. We can degrade Passover by not preparing. First Corinthians was Paul's letter to the church of Corinth to correct and instruct them in the way they kept the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was written for their Passover/Feast in A.D. 55 or 56. In this letter, in regards to the conduct of their worship services, Paul told them, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 15:40). Let's be sure to keep the Passover Seder that way. We should therefore clean and remove any leavening from the specific rooms where Passover is to be kept (Ex.34:25, 1 Cor.5:7-8)—setting it aside to be disposed of on the following morning. Let's consider each of these points, beginning first with the need to be prepared ahead of time to ensure an organized and unleavened Passover setting. If questions remain, I encourage you to review the earlier chapters dealing with the need to be unleavened to keep the feast.

God tells us to eat unleavened bread Passover night (Ex. 12:8). Since leavening symbolizes Egypt and sin, leavening should not be served and is removed from the room the Paschal meal is eaten in, to be disposed of the next day. Paul taught the Gentiles to be unleavened because Christ became our Passover Lamb:

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, 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.

—1 Cor. 5:7–8

Yeshua told His disciples, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat” (Luke 22:8). The Passover preparation will ensure the rooms to be used are reasonably clean, unleavened, and set in order, so as to be sanctified (2 Chron. 30:15-17). God is not honored when we don’t give Him our best (see Malachi chapter one). Also, preparation is required to roast the lamb with bitter herbs and to prepare and set out the unleavened bread and the wine. The table needs to be set ahead of time. The Kiddush cup and enough wine cups for each person need to be placed at the seat of the patriarch or head of household to fill and distribute later.

The atmosphere of the home is another important aspect of Passover and its preparation. Some parents allow their children to be unruly, disrespectful, and boisterous. Some houses look like a cyclone went through them. While Passover is a feast—and as such should be filled with joy—an unclean, disorganized, chaotic, or unruly household atmosphere would not be fitting for the formalities and solemnity of the Passover Seder. God told Israel to prepare for His presence by sanctifying themselves and washing their clothes (Ex. 19:10). The Passover service should be

held with the same standards of conduct and dress as other Sabbath church or synagogue services. Children should not be left to themselves to run about and play in a way that is disruptive. They need to be taught and prepared to be respectful of the evening and its important symbols. If a household is not capable of being clean, organized, and prepared for Passover, and if the children of the household are not capable of being calm and attentive long enough in their own home to keep the solemnity of the evening, perhaps that household is not the best house to host the Passover that year. Perhaps they may want to join another household that is better equipped to host the Passover Seder, until such time as they are better prepared to host it themselves. Let's keep the Passover with our children as the holy joyous family feast God intended it to be, but with the dignity fitting such a solemn occasion. Paul wrote, "*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all*" (1 Thess. 5:14, emphasis added).

Friends, I hope God's words and some respectful common sense can clear this up for us all. Remember, it is our blessed children who will be the greatest benefactors.

PASSOVER SYMBOLS

The Passover meal primarily consisted of lamb prepared with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. From biblical times, wine has also been an important part of

the Passover meal. Let's review some of the symbols and their rich meanings and the order in which they were taken, both in Old Testament times and by Yeshua and His disciples.

Passover Lamb

The symbolism of eating the lamb is that it represents the body of our Lord, the Lamb of God. Yeshua was repeatedly called the Lamb that was slain for the world. Indeed, John first represents the Messiah as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Through Yeshua's blood, God “passed over” us for judgment. Peter represents Yeshua as the perfect spotless Lamb, whose blood redeems us, just like the blood that had to be put on the doorposts at Passover (Ex. 12:22): “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19).

Right up to the end of his life, John continued to describe Jesus as the Lamb of God who redeems us (Rev. 5:6–10). Just like the unleavened bread at Passover, the Passover lambs had to be eaten (Ex. 12:5–9). We also must eat of our Passover Lamb from God that was sacrificed for us on the very day of Passover.

Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh

is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.”

—John 6:53–57

Our Messiah is both the Lamb of God and the Shepherd of His Father’s flock.

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

—Rev. 7:16 –17

As the Lamb, Jesus died to give us life. As the Shepherd, He guides us to green pastures where we can eat the spiritual food that satiates our souls; we will no longer hunger for anything. He leads us to the living waters to finally quench our thirst. He protects us from the heat of the day, just like, as a Shepherd, He led Israel out of Egypt under the protection of a cloud (Ex. 13:22). The heat did not strike them. And as a Shepherd, He heals up and binds our wounds—including the wounds of the heart (Isa. 61:1–3)—so that we are comforted. There shall be found no more reason for tears.

Hyssop

The blood of the Passover lamb had to be applied to the doorposts with a “bunch of hyssop” (Ex. 12:22). Hyssop is a shrub with hairy stems. A clean person would use hyssop to sprinkle the ashes of the red heifer mixed with water over an unclean person as a symbol that the unclean person had now been purified from his uncleanness (Num. 19:17–18). Hyssop was used as part of a purification ceremony after a person was cleansed from leprosy (Lev. 14:2–7) as a symbol that the sacrifice of purification had been transferred to the recipient. This ceremony with the sprinkling of blood with the hyssop was used as a sign to others that the person receiving the ceremony was now clean and to be accepted back into the camp (Lev. 14:8). After his sin with Bathsheba, David cried out to God, “Purge me with hyssop” (Ps. 51:7). David was asking not only for forgiveness, but with the hyssop, he sought a public sign to Israel of his cleansing. God does not do things without meaning. Jesus’ bloody, sacrificial crucifixion included drinking from a bunch of hyssop. I believe this was given as a public sign that the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior was being transferred to us as well. It was a symbol of our being cleansed by His blood. But just as the symbolism of hyssop was only applied after the cleansing, so Jesus did not receive hyssop until after He fulfilled all that He was sent to do:

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled,

said, “I thirst!” Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

—John 19:28–30

Jesus, having accomplished all things, was about to receive hyssop. When He said, “I thirst,” He knew He would receive a drink of bitterness (bitter wine, like the bitter herbs at Passover) from the end of a bunch of hyssop, for He knew all things that would come upon Him (John 18:4). Once He tasted the bitterness with the hyssop, He said, “It is finished.” Thank God for this public confirmation of our cleansing by the blood of the Lamb.

Bitter Herbs

Numbers 9:11 reads, “On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.”

God commands that the Passover lamb be roasted with fire and eaten with bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8). The bitter herbs represent the utter bitterness of bondage and sin, for God said, “They [Egypt] made their lives bitter with hard bondage” (Ex. 1:14). Because of the rebellion and persistent sin of Israel, God later turned Israel over as slaves once more to the Chaldean-Babylonian Empire. God called the Chaldeans, “A bitter and hasty

nation” (Hab. 1:6). Bitterness was symbolic of affliction, misery, and servitude. Eating bitter herbs reminds us of what life is like without God and the freedom we have in Him. It reminds us of what life would again be like if we were to foolishly turn from God and return to the bitterness of sin and the bondage it brings, for to do so would be like a dog returning to the bitterness of his vomit (Prov. 26:11).

There is a variety of bitter herbs that are used at Passover. Horseradish is an oft used bitter herb with Pascal lamb as it goes well with meat. Parsley works well as a spicy bitter herb for cooking, or as a garnish and in salads. Also, a colorful but bitter leafy salad mix, usually including dandelion, makes a great Passover salad. The lamb or goat was roasted with fire, not boiled, and eaten with unleavened bread (Ex. 12:8–9). Bitter herbs were rubbed on the lamb before roasting, and used in the broth as a sop for dipping unleavened bread in. Since we no longer sacrifice a lamb—as Jesus was the sacrifice once for all (Heb. 10:10)—we do not need to concern ourselves with the disposal of the hide and bones etc., but the symbolism of the use of lamb and bitter herbs, with the unleavened bread and red wine, remains a rich reminder as we follow in the footsteps of the early church in continuing to eat the Passover while telling and expounding its valuable meanings.

Passover would be a good time to avoid sweets or desserts. Sweets would be best enjoyed on the following evening in celebration of the freedom from sin that

special night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread typifies. It's called "a night to be much observed" (Ex. 12:42). That is the night and occasion to celebrate Israel's freedom, and the freedom we all have to look forward to with sweets.

Yeshua Commanded Foot Washing

After the main meal but still during the Passover service, while the disciples were still reclining around the supper table, Jesus gave instruction for foot washing to become part of the service for His disciples. Notice the importance of His words:

And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

—John 13:2–7

This shows the example of humility that Jesus set for us to follow. His focus was one of total surrender to God's will and one of complete humble sacrifice and service to

His brethren and disciples. What is even more incredible is His humble service even to His betrayer, Judas. The Devil had already put it into Judas's heart to betray our Lord (v. 2), but we know from verse 11 that Judas was still present. Yet, Jesus washed his feet in humble service anyway. This must have heaped coals of fire upon Judas's head (Prov. 25:21-11). Passover is a time to be merciful, graciously humble, and thankful. Jesus' instructions are that we too humbly wash one another's feet:

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, *you also ought to wash one another's feet*. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, *blessed are you if you do them*."

—John 13:12–17, emphasis added

Yeshua's words are quite clear. This isn't merely a metaphor, but a literal act of love and humility that we are to practice in association with Passover each year. Foot washing was and is an act of humble service, and it is now part of the Passover for messianic or New Testament Christians. Having practiced foot washing at Passover for many years, I can tell you that it incites an incredible bond of brotherhood and fosters an attitude

of humility and forgiveness among the congregation. It was not just a nice idea. It's what Yeshua said we should do. But we only benefit from the lessons and spirit that this incredible symbolic act teaches, and we only receive the blessing Christ promised for practicing foot washing as we do it! The words "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" say it all (Matt. 25:40).

If the Messiah, being perfect, washed our feet, how much more should we obey Him and kneel before our brother or sister, conscious that we are all sinners, and wash their feet? Let's do it!

Parents must decide when their children are mature enough to participate in the foot-washing part of the Passover service. Perhaps the age of the Bar Mitzvah for boys (thirteen) or Bat Mitzvah for girls (twelve) would be a fitting age. For some, it may be sooner and for some it may be later. But it is my sincere belief that for parents to force their children to wash another member's feet would be counterproductive. Such an act of humility and service to others is a decision that should be made willingly from the heart, and that cannot be forced.

Along with the lessons of humility and service associated with the foot washing, Yeshua also explained a fuller, deeper, symbolic meaning for the bread and the wine after the dinner.

The Bread and the Wine

The Torah is replete with examples of unleavened bread and wine being offered with the priestly sacrifices.

These sacrifices and offerings point to Christ the Lamb of God. Other than Jesus' instruction for the foot washing, Jesus did not institute a cluster of new Passover symbols. Lamb, unleavened bread, and red wine were not new to Passover. What was new was His deeper explanation of their meanings and their application. As Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, Jesus explained to them much more completely the depth of meaning behind the symbols of unleavened bread and wine.

In Luke 22:19–20 we read, “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.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”

This exculpatory act of our Messiah on our behalf provides complete forgiveness and complete freedom from the bondage with which a sinful lifestyle hedges us in. It is such a great gift of love leading to life that it is beyond human words to describe. Thank God for Messiah's blood.

Considerable time will not be taken here to retell the beautiful symbolism behind the Passover bread, because that has been covered thoroughly in chapter 6 of this book. Luke's clear account above is sufficient here. But there is more to be said about the blood our Messiah spilled on our behalf.

Remember, those who didn't come under the blood of the Passover lamb were killed if they were the firstborn,

or they remained in Egypt and were subject to the other plagues and punishments (including the death of family members) if they were not firstborn. This is not unlike those who have not yet accepted Yeshua Messiah today. Paul wrote to Timothy, “In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, *having been taken captive by him to do his will*” (2 Tim. 2:25–26, emphasis added).

How many people realize the blood of Passover was about freedom as much as it was about life? Those who do not come under the blood of the lamb are still not free (Rom. 3:24–25; 6:18; John 8:35–36). Many who have yet to repent and accept Christ are still held captive by the Devil today (typed by captivity under Pharaoh in Egypt).

Jesus explained that those who believe in Him and abide by His word are free indeed, but those who remain in sin are slaves to sin (John 8:31–36).

We were all children of bondage in slavery to sin, just like Israel. But thanks to the blood of Christ our Passover, we’re delivered from the bondage of the Devil and sin (Rom. 6:6–23).

The blood of Jesus provides justification for us: “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:9).

Once we are made free by the blood of our Passover, then we begin the journey out of Egypt and toward freedom as we learn to walk within God’s laws, which are love toward God and love toward neighbor. We

don't obtain perfection, but we grow more godly as we learn and obey. As we grow and overcome sin, we also continue under His mercy to place our trust in Him, for His pure blood justifies us once and for all, so long as we don't turn back (Col. 1:20–22; Heb. 9:11–14).

One of the lessons of Passover is that we can make it! Passover is about freedom. It's about forgiveness. It's about being led out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Passover is not a focus on what we can do for ourselves. It is a focus on what God is doing for us. That's why we can make it! God does not fail. Unless we give up or turn back to Egypt (sin), God will see our salvation through (Phil. 1:6). Never let anyone take that hope from you.

YESHUA'S PASSOVER EXAMPLE

It was customary to explain the history and meaning of the day during the meal. This is what we find Jesus doing. He taught the disciples as they ate the Passover. Their service, while formal, was while they reclined around the supper table. It was not a classroom or lecture-style setting. Jesus continued that ancient practice as God had commanded, but He carried it further by explaining it in the new covenant context and showing Himself as its fulfillment. Their ceremonious service, with its ritual symbols passed down from centuries past, was explained by Jesus to them in much greater detail than had ever been taught to them before. This brought the Passover to a new depth of meaning and purpose that was not possible prior to that night.

It remains the time-honored responsibility of each male head of household to take the time to teach the meaning of the symbols as we eat the Passover at its appointed time each year. The *Jewish New Testament Commentary* by David H. Stern, explains this beautifully:

At Passover Jews all over the world retell the story of the plagues and the Exodus and thus proclaim the central fact of which their peoplehood is founded (see 5:6–8N). Likewise, members of the Messianic Community are to **proclaim the death of the Lord** as their exodus from sin and as the basis for their existence. Both proclamations look not only back toward a past redemption but also forward to a future one; hence the proclamation is **until he comes** the second time.¹

Since the Passover was to be conducted in an area near to “where the Lord had placed His name” (Deut. 16:2–6), each family would already be gathered into the general area so they could join the larger general assembly and keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the following day (Deut. 16:8; Lev. 23:5–7). This command Jesus and the apostles also fulfilled.

Though we find Jesus and His disciples keeping the Passover one day earlier than the Temple Jews were keeping it, it is worth reminding the reader that the Jews in and around Jerusalem did not find Jesus’ practice of keeping Passover on the fourteenth of Abib strange. Nor did they find it strange that someone would keep the Passover at a location other than at the temple. It

seems that most of the leading Jews of that day took great care to attack Jesus or His disciples at every opportunity. They complained that Jesus' disciples were not washing their hands correctly (Mark 7:2–5). They tried to accuse the disciples of breaking the Sabbath by plucking a handful of grain to eat as they navigated between the various fields of grain on one of Yeshua's gospel missions (Matt. 12:1–2). They tried to claim Jesus broke the Sabbath by healing the sick on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:10; Luke 13:14). They tried to twist Jesus' words to accuse Him of teaching others not to pay taxes (Luke 23:2). They tried to take advantage of Jesus' merciful nature by using it in an attempt to trap, and thereby, accuse Him of forsaking God's judgments (John 8:3–11). They tried to catch Him in any way possible with any perceived fault or violation of their traditions (Luke 11:54).

The complete absence of persecution Jesus and His disciples received for keeping the Passover Seder on the fourteenth of Abib instead of the fifteenth speaks volumes! Clearly, if keeping the Passover one day earlier than the temple Jews was a violation of all accepted tradition, or if it had been an uncommon practice among the Jews of the day, Jesus' detractors would have publicly attacked and accused Him for it, like they did over every perceived infraction against their traditions that they could find. Passover is, and always has been, of great importance. To violate it would have brought a strong reaction. But they didn't accuse Him in these regards, because it was not uncommon for some

Jews to keep the Passover service on the fourteenth (that is, at the beginning of the fourteenth so that the entire Passover service and meal actually fell on the fourteenth). Even the Sadducees argued the scriptural basis for such a service.

Interesting also was that neither Messiah Yeshua nor His disciples were persecuted for keeping a smaller intimate Passover, instead of going to temple. Passover has always been primarily a family gathering with some friends to worship and express thanks to the Lord in the way He instructed.

So as a reminder, when and where did this confusion of an Abib fifteenth Seder come from? It came from the Babylonian captivity.

The feast of Passover consists of two parts: The Passover ceremony and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Originally both parts existed separately; *but at the beginning of the Exile they were combined*. Passover was originally not a pilgrimage feast, but a domestic ceremony consisting of the slaughtering and eating of the paschal animal. Originally, the Passover was celebrated among the families (Ex.12:21).... After the cultic centralization of King Josiah, the celebration of the Passover was transferred to the central Sanctuary in Jerusalem.²

That is an amazingly frank admission from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*: “Originally both parts [Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread] existed separately; but at the beginning of the Exile they were combined.”

Originally they were kept as two separate feasts—one on the fourteenth and the other beginning on the fifteenth. Once under the influence of their Babylonian captors, the Israelites combined the two, that is, the Passover was transferred one day and combined with the feast that began on the fifteenth.

Many Jews recognize the eventual combining of the two separate Feast days into one. Notice the admission of Rabbi Johathan Bernis, in his excellent book *A Rabbi Looks at the Last Days*: “This Feast [of Unleavened Bread] begins the day after Passover ends, and lasts for seven days. Over the years, it has gradually been incorporated into Passover.”³

But not all Jews have accepted this change, and certainly Jesus and His disciples were not confused to accept a change from the day Almighty God commanded Passover to be observed.

Now let’s look at some passages detailing Yeshua’s Passover with His disciples and glean more understanding from the events and the order of the events as they took place.

Luke 22:15–16 says, “Then He said to them, ‘With fervent 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.’”

The Messiah made two important points here:

1. Jesus said He desired to “eat this Passover” meal with His disciples. He didn’t only teach His disciples the important symbolic meanings;

He ate the Passover with them while He taught them. This was not merely eating a small piece of unleavened bread with a sip of wine. The new ceremonial meaning of unleavened bread was not mentioned until a few verses later. To eat the Passover was to eat the Passover lamb and the bitter herbs with the unleavened bread and wine.

2. Jesus said He would eat it again with them in the kingdom of God (v. 16). Therefore, eating the Passover was and will always be a part of keeping the Passover. Let's see what else we can learn from Luke's account: "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).

There are several important points to glean from these two verses, but especially the practice of the use of wine with the blessings during the Paschal meal.

First, this cup was the cup that was drunk during the meal—not to be confused with the later cup mentioned in verse 20, which was taken after the meal. Luke mentions two different cups with two distinctive and different blessings for two distinct and different purposes. Many do not realize this. Luke was the gospel writer who took the greatest care and focus on recording a consecutive, step-by-step account of each individual event of Yeshua's life as it happened (Luke 1:3–4).

Second, when Yeshua took this cup of wine, He said a special prayer and blessed God before He passed it around. Wine has long been used in association with blessings to and from God (for example, Gen. 27:25, 28; Isa. 65:8; Joel 2:14). It would be too cumbersome to list the numerous places in Scripture where wine was used as part of the sacrifices and offerings, but apart from the Jews, much of society has lost the association of wine with blessings. Blessing with wine has continued with the Rabin and Jews but has been lost to many others. Notice the blessing of Melchizedek when he blessed Abram: “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and *wine*; he was the priest of God Most High. *And he blessed him* and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth’” (Gen. 14:18–19, emphasis added).

This is one reason why Jesus used wine when He blessed God on Passover evening before dividing it up among His disciples. The Greek word *apta*, translated “gave thanks,” means to be grateful to God, to praise, to bless, and to worship God. It includes more than the limited English translation “gave thanks.”

The third main point that stands out is the “dividing” of the “cup of blessing” (as Paul called it [1 Cor. 10:16]) among the disciples. After the blessing with the wine, Jesus told His disciples to “divide it among yourselves.” The Greek word for cup simply means “drinking vessel.” When the cup (drinking vessel) is used for blessing, it is called the “cup of blessing” or the Kiddush cup, meaning “cup of sanctification.” A larger

and special wine goblet was used for the blessings. Some pass the Kiddush around for all present to drink from in order to fulfill the instruction “divide it among yourselves.” Others use what’s called a wine fountain as part of a Kiddush cup set, wherein, after the blessing, the contents of the larger main Cup of Sanctification are poured and diverted into eight to twelve smaller cups at a time. Then those cups can be given to each member. Others simply use a larger drinking vessel, or one that that is more like the size of a small pitcher, as their Kiddush. Then is said the blessing before pouring its contents into as many other smaller cups as is necessary to accommodate those keeping Passover. Either way, the blessing is said *after* the wine is poured into the Cup of Blessing, and *before* the wine is divided among the people.

Let’s continue learning from our Master and Lord through Luke’s excellent successive record. Luke 22:19–20 says, “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.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”

Verse 19 tells us Jesus took the unleavened bread and presented it in a new light by explaining that it represented His body that was broken for us. Again the phrase “gave thanks” is better translated in some Bibles to portray that He thanked, glorified, and blessed God—not merely that He gave thanks. This then is not

referring to the eating of the main meal but the new ceremony of the breaking and eating of unleavened bread as representative of His body.

Luke then shows the reader the second cup of wine. Notice that this cup was not with the Passover meal but after it, for “likewise He also took the cup after supper” (v. 20). We know that this cup also had a special prayer/blessing because of Luke’s word “likewise.” This cup “after supper” had a totally distinct and separate meaning from the one taken with the meal in verse 17. This cup represented Yeshua’s blood, which was shed for you and me. This was an enlightening moment indeed. Not many Christians who keep Passover recognize there were different cups of blessing at Passover with different purposes, but Jewish believers (messianic) do, as do observant Jews. The blessings contained in Yeshua’s Haggadah (telling) explained their fulfillment and deeper meanings. If not for Luke’s careful successive account, we would still have ample historical records of the different cups of wine and blessings used at Passover. But thanks be to God for providing us with scriptural proof.

Now let’s go on to Matthew’s account and see what other gifts of truth God has to reveal to those with eyes to see and ears willing to hear.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new

covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

—Matt 26:26–28

The reader will notice “*it*” in verse 26 is in italics, meaning the word was supplied by the translators and is not in any original biblical text. Matthew is recording for us what Jesus blessed. He did not bless “*it*,” meaning the bread. Matthew’s record simply says, Jesus blessed. It was not customary to bless bread, food, wine, or things. Blessings were said to God and/or for people. Jesus blessed God and blessed His disciples, not the bread. Matthew’s word for “blessed” in verse 26 is *eulogeo* (Strong’s #2127), meaning to bless and praise, to pronounce as blessed, or to invoke God’s blessing. This is a totally different word from the Greek word *eucharister* (Strong’s #2168), which is translated “gave thanks” in verse 27, and which has more of the meaning of being grateful in prayer. There can be no doubt: Jesus set the example of pronouncing or recounting blessings during and after the Passover Seder—separate from and in addition to—the prayers and giving of thanks during the Passover.

Matthew, writing for the Hebrews, did not concern himself as much with the successive order because the Jews he was addressing already knew the order of the Passover service. Matthew was more interested in giving as much information as possible, so he uses verbiage that bears record of the clear distinction between the different Passover blessings from the prayers.

Like Luke, Matthew also points out that Jesus clearly ate a Seder Passover while He taught His disciples and that He said He would eat it again with them in His Father's coming kingdom (Matt. 26:17–30). But, clearly blessing, as well as prayer-filled gratefulness and praise, was part of the Passover service of your Lord and Savior.

In case there is any doubt about the meaning of the word translated “blessing,” (that is, to bless God and bless His disciples) as literally meaning blessing and not just prayer, the following examples of the same word “blessing” are provided in their context:

He took Him up in his arms and *blessed God* and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.”
—Luke 2:28-32

And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising *and blessing* God. Amen.
—Luke 24:52-53

The reader may also want to examine 1 Cor. 14:16; and James 3:9. Also, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the same word that was used by Matthew for “blessing” is used in David's blessing found in 1 Chronicles 29:10–20.

At the conclusion of Yeshua's Passover, He and His disciples sang hymns from the *Hallel* Psalms, before departing to the Mount of Olives: "After singing the *Hallel*, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30 CJB).

Scholars, commentaries, and historical accounts all bear record that it was especially customary to sing hymns from Psalms 113–118 during or concluding the Seder, but also at other feasts. Psalm 113 is a psalm of praise and blessing. The first word in Psalm 113 is "praise," from the Hebrew word *hallel*. *Hallel* is from the word *hallelujah*, meaning "Praise God." Psalm 114 is about Passover and Israel's exodus out of Egypt. Psalms 115–118 are about being delivered from death and saved by the majestic power of God, and of the giving of thanks and blessing His name for that deliverance. The reciting, discussion, and singing from Psalms 113–118 during the Seder has always been an important part of the Passover. Yeshua's Passover was no exception.

PAUL'S PASSOVER TEACHING AND EXAMPLE

Scholars recognize that the book of 1 Corinthians was written for the church at Corinth to read during the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Many commentators point this out, as does the context of the book itself. But this book is corrective and was written out of necessity. Instead of being humbly repentant and mournful of their sins, the Corinthians were proud and puffed up (1 Cor. 4:6, 18–19; 5:2; 13:4). Some were greedy, eating gluttonously at Passover while not

sharing with those in need, and some were even getting drunk at Passover (1 Cor. 11:21).

This book had to be written because the church at Corinth had in previous years so cheapened the Passover and ignored the lessons of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that some were cursed to death for it.

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

—1 Cor. 11:27–31

Paul was so totally disgusted with their conduct that he called their way of keeping Passover a farce. Paul told them, “Therefore when *you* come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For [because] in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk” (1 Cor. 11:20–21, emphasis added).

Paul did not say we should not come together in one place to eat the Lord's Supper. He told the confused and worldly church at Corinth that the way *they* were conducting themselves showed they were not really eating the Lord's Supper. Dear reader, I hope you can see

the difference. Surely, you can. Many have taken Paul's words correcting the abuses of the church of Corinth out of their context and have thus imputed to Paul words as if he was instructing all believers not to take the Lord's Supper, i.e., that Paul was teaching us not to have Paschal meal with the telling or service of the Passover. What a profound mistake of oversight. What a misleading assumption. What a profound indifference to the context of what Paul actually said. Don't let men abrogate God's instructions to you through their own inability to see.

Paul was teaching the Corinthians that Passover was not a time to selfishly eat and drink to excesses. And especially not to selfishly eat and drink publicly while not sharing with those who have nothing to eat at all. Paul said it was a shame (1 Cor. 11:22). Passover is a ceremonial meal portraying God's mercy upon His people. There's no room for greedy selfishness in it. If a person really just wanted to eat and eat and eat, Paul said to do that at home (1 Cor. 11:22, 34). If a person really wanted to imbibe himself with wine to the full, he should do that privately at home as well, having enough respect not to shame the church (1 Cor. 11:22). If a person was too selfish to share, eat at home.

If Paul was telling all the churches, or even the church of Corinth, that they were not supposed to eat the Lord's Supper (as some claim), then why did Paul tell the Corinthians only a few verses later how to properly eat the Lord's Supper with the church? Verse 33 reads, "Therefore, my brethren, *when you*

come together to eat, wait for one another” (emphasis added). Clearly Paul was still speaking of the Paschal meal—or—“the Lord’s Supper”—a term more easily understood by the Gentiles.

To blindly teach against eating the Passover is to profoundly disregard the context of what Paul was saying and goes contrary not only to Paul’s true teachings, but also to the example of Jesus and His disciples. Remember, Paul started this chapter regarding Passover instructions by saying, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Christ’s Passover service included the Supper (Seder), and so did Paul’s.

Why was Passover called the “Lord’s Supper” in 1 Corinthians? Considering that they were a Gentile church, it seems reasonable that Paul was using verbiage that would make sense to that weak and feeble church. But the context of taking the bread and wine and the identical quotes from the gospel accounts makes it abundantly clear that the Passover Seder is what Paul was referring to (1 Cor. 11:23–26).

It is also interesting to ask those who feel Passover should not be kept by the church today, or those who feel Paul taught against eating the Passover meal, if such were the case, how did the church at Corinth ever get the idea to eat a Passover meal with the wine and unleavened bread in the first place? Being a Gentile church, they had to have been taught. Since Paul was the one who raised them up, he is the one who taught them about the Passover Seder. The problem was not in the eating of Passover, but in the way they were abusing

the food and drink, and thereby bringing damnation upon themselves (1 Cor. 11:30). They neglected the spiritual teachings in favor of physically abusing the symbols.

Suffice it to say, Paul corrected and taught the Corinthians how to properly eat the Passover and conduct the service. He was not telling us we should not eat the Passover Seder or the Lord's Supper. With a little exegesis that much is made very clear. But with a little eisegesis blindness is perpetuated, and people suffer loss.

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT; A NIGHT TO BE MUCH REMEMBERED

Some have confused the special night that follows that of the Passover by one day with the Passover night itself. Others have laden the evening with traditions that at times break God's laws. Some do not recognize the evening in any way, while still others see the evening as representing God's watchfulness over Israel to free them. Why is the night called the "night to be much remembered" (or observed)?

Exodus 12:42 says, "It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations."

Notice it says, "This is that night of the LORD." The Hebrew word *shimuriym*, translated "solemn observance" above in the New King James Version, literally

means vigilant watchfulness for the special way YHVH watched over His people to deliver them on that night. *Shimuriym* refers to God's watching over Israel in the beginning of the verse; it refers to the way God's people are to observe and remember the evening throughout their generations in the end of the verse.

Consider how the Complete Jewish Bible translates Exodus 12:42: "This was a night when *Adonai* kept vigil to bring them out of the land of Egypt, and this same night continues to be a night when *Adonai* keeps vigil for all the people of Israel through all their generations."

Let's now see the clarity shown in the English Standard Version: "It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations."

Some believe the observance of this night is referring to the delivering events of the night of Abib 14, Passover night, which finally convinced Pharaoh to allow Israel to leave Egypt. Thus they believe they fulfill the command to "observe" this evening when they keep Passover. But Israel did not leave Egypt Passover night; they were not to even come out of their homes until the morning after Passover (Ex. 12:22). God's Word says this night of watching refers to the actual night Israel departed, which fell on the night of Abib 15 on the day after the Passover (Deut. 16:1; Num. 33:3). We are to annually remember the night after Passover as a night

of vigil or a night to watch and observe throughout our generations.

Since God's Word is not specific in regard to how the night should be observed, how might we observe it? Similarly, God tells us to "observe" the New Moons (Deut. 16:1; Ezek 46:3; Isa. 66:23). The scriptural examples of new moon observance are no more specific than the night to be much observed, but new moon observance did include worshipping God, fellowshiping with other believers, and often—but not always—meals. Similarly, God has not given us specific instructions as to how to observe the first night of the holy Feast of Unleavened Bread. Food is usually a welcomed addition to the evening, so long as it does not become a burden on the holy day.

Many have made it their tradition on the night to be much observed to go out to a restaurant with other brethren and eat a festive meal, while conversing with one another about the history of the evening. This would be an acceptable tradition if it were not for the fact that it breaks God's laws against trading with the merchants on the Sabbath!

Nehemiah 10:31 says, "If the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, *we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day*" (emphasis added).

We must never place the value of our traditions above the laws of our God.

Others keep the night to be much observed with a festive meal in their homes. This is an acceptable

custom, for while God's law forbids trade on the Sabbath, it does allow the work necessary for food preparation on the annual Sabbath feast days: "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" (Ex. 12:16).

While it is certainly permissible and desirable to eat a festival meal on that special night of remembering God's watch, it is not a requirement. It would be just as biblical to fellowship and reminisce about the evening, without having to always have a full festive meal. Perhaps mere drinks and finger foods or desserts would satiate the appetites of brethren keeping God's feast together as they remembered all God has done and is doing to save His people. Surely that would be just as biblical. To remember the evening is more important than overburdening it with tradition, especially when the weekly Sabbath falls too close to High Day of Unleavened Bread.

Sadly, some have used the Night to be Much Observed as a sort of surrogate Paschal meal. But the true Paschal meal takes place on the Passover evening, a full day and night before Israel left Egypt (Num. 33:3), and a full day and night before God instructs to observe this evening (Ex 12:42). There is no substitute for God's laws and testimonies, and the Passover is so much more than a meal.

Each one should be fully persuaded, but one thing is certain: The night Israel left Egypt is to be much remembered as a night that God watched over Israel to deliver them on Abib 15.

Armed, then, with all the biblical truths revealed in this and the previous chapters of this book, let's review the order of the Passover service next.