

# OBSERVANCE OF THE PASSOVER

OBSERVANCE OF THE PASSOVER BY THE JEWISH PEOPLE  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house...

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they shall eat it.

And ye shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it...

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial: and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever” (Ex. 12:1-3, 6-8, 12-14).

God, through Moses, gave Israel instructions at Mt. Sinai for seven festivals (Lev. 23:1ff). These were given to the nation following the giving of the Law and instructions concerning the tabernacle and priesthood, preceding their journey to Kadesh-Barnea (cf. Ex. 40:34-38; Lev. 1:1; Num. 1:1; 10:11, 12).

These seven festivals were to be observed by the Jewish people year after year throughout their generations. And these festivals were to be observed after the manner in which Scripture outlines and deals with them.

## The First Festival, the Passover

The instructions for the observance of the Passover — the first of the seven festivals — is not given in Leviticus chapter twenty-three. Rather, it is given at the time of its institution in Exodus chapter twelve. The simple statement in Lev. 23:5, introducing the Passover as the first of the seven festivals, rests on the previous instructions and initial keeping of the Passover, as seen in Ex. 12:1ff.

The observance of the Passover was to occur on the fourteenth day of what, at that time, became the first month of the Jewish year. This was to be “the beginning of months” for the nation (vv. 2, 14).

Thus, the observance of the Passover by the Jewish people throughout all their future generations (on the fourteenth day of the first month of each year), can only be seen, from a historical standpoint, as a beginning time in Jewish life for the coming year — a new beginning for a new year.

## The Passover in the Camp of Israel, Past

At the time that the Passover was instituted, Moses had returned to and had been accepted by the Jewish people. Nine different plagues had befallen the kingdom of the Assyrian Pharaoh ruling over Egypt. And the Passover — which had to do with *the death of the firstborn* — was to be the tenth and final plague befalling those in the land of Egypt.

(The Assyrians had previously come down and conquered Egypt [evidently over a century prior to this time]. And they formed the rulers in Egypt during Moses’ day [cf. Ex. 1:8, 9; Isa. 52:4].)

The Passover, having to do with *the death of the firstborn*, was different than any of the previous plagues. This plague, unlike the previous plagues, *would equally affect not only those in the kingdom of the Assyrian but those in the camp of Israel as well* (cf. Ex. 8:22, 23; 9:6, 7, 11, 23-26; 10:4-6, 21-23; 11:4-7; 12:12, 13). Every firstborn throughout the land of Egypt, both man and beast, would die. *There were no exceptions.*

The firstborn in every family in the kingdom of the Assyrian, from the one seated on the throne to the lowest in the kingdom, would die (Ex. 11:4, 5); and, the firstborn in every family in the camp of Israel, without regard to anything except the fact that the person was the firstborn, would die as well. Again, *there were no exceptions.*

However, in the camp of Israel, God provided a means whereby the firstborn in a family could experience death *via a substitute* — a *vicarious death*. On the tenth day of the first month, every family could take a lamb from the flock (a male lamb, in its first year), pen the lamb, check the lamb for blemishes over several days time, and then slay the lamb at a specified time on the fourteenth day of the month (the Hebrew text states “between the evenings” as the time when the lamb was to be slain, *i.e.* in the middle of the afternoon).

The blood from the slain lamb was to be caught in a basin, hyssop was then to be dipped in the blood, and the blood was to be applied to the two side posts and the upper door post of the house in which the firstborn lived. Then, the same lamb which had been slain was to be eaten by those in the household.

And this scene was to be repeated at this time in house after house after house throughout the camp of Israel.

The Lord was going to pass through the land of Egypt at midnight (some nine hours after the lambs had been slain and the blood applied), executing His

previous decree upon the firstborn. He was going to slay the firstborn in every household, again without regard to any distinction between those in the kingdom of the Assyrian and those in the camp of Israel.

However, God had provided a means whereby the firstborn in any Israeli family could experience death *via a substitutionary means*. *The paschal lamb could die in his stead*.

In this respect, when the Lord passed through the land of Egypt at midnight, He looked for *one thing and one thing only*. He looked for *the blood of a slain lamb, properly applied* (Ex. 12:12, 13, 23).

*If He saw the blood*, He passed over that house. Death had already occurred in that house; the firstborn had already died, in a substitute. The Lord recognized this substitutionary death. Thus, He couldn't slay the one already reckoned as dead, and *He passed over that Israeli home*.

But, *if the Lord did not see the blood* (the instructions concerning death, shed blood, and the proper application of the blood had not been followed), the firstborn in the family was then slain. *Death had been decreed upon the firstborn in every family, and the firstborn in every family had to die, whether via a substitute or apart from a substitute*.

### **The Passover in the Camp of Israel, Present**

Any attempt by the Jewish people to observe the Passover during the present time, according to the instructions which God provided in Exodus chapter twelve, *must involve death, shed blood, the proper application of that blood, and the eating of the Lamb that had been slain*. *It must involve a substitutionary death for the firstborn in the family, followed by an eating of the Lamb*.

Anything short of this *cannot* be an observance of the Passover at all. It can only be an observance of something else.

In reality though, since the Paschal Lamb has already died and His blood has already been shed (I Cor. 5:7), any true observance of the Passover can occur *only one way today*, with everything still completely in line with that stated in Exodus chapter

twelve. The Passover can only be kept today by the shed blood being properly applied, followed by the Lamb being eaten.

In short, Israel slew the Paschal Lamb 2,000 years ago, but the nation has yet to apply the blood and eat the slain Lamb.

(The paschal lamb was given to Israel, and only Israel could slay this lamb. And since this is true, only Israel could have slain the Paschal Lamb 2,000 years ago, the nation's Jewish Messiah, which is clearly attributed to Israel in Scripture [Acts 2:23, 36; 3:14-17; 7:51, 52].

[E.g., during Moses' day, an Egyptian family could not have escaped the death of the firstborn through following the instructions given to Moses in Ex. 12. The paschal lamb *was not* given to the Egyptians. It was given to *Israel*, and *Israel alone* could slay this lamb.

The only possible way in which the firstborn in an Egyptian family could have experienced a vicarious death the night of the Passover was for that family to be inside an Israeli home where God's instructions had been followed, for "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

The eating of the Lamb is then a subsequent matter [cf. John 6:48-58]. The Paschal Lamb is the Word manifested in the form of flesh [John 1:1, 2, 14]. And one presently eats the Paschal Lamb following the application of the blood through assimilating the Word in written form.)

### **The Passover in the Camp of Israel, Future**

The institution of the Passover in the land of Egypt in Exodus chapter twelve had to do with the birth of a nation. This occurred following Moses' return, preceding God removing His people from Egypt, and preceding the overthrow of the Assyrian and his armed forces in the Red Sea.

This foreshadows a future time when, through Israel's observance of the Passover, there will be a re-birth of the nation. In the words of Isa. 66:8, a

nation will be "born at once." This will occur following Christ's return (as it occurred following Moses' return), preceding God removing the Jewish people from a worldwide dispersion (as it occurred preceding their being removed from Egypt during Moses' day); and this will occur preceding the overthrow of the kingdom of the Assyrian in that future day (as it occurred preceding the overthrow of the kingdom of the Assyrian during Moses' day).

(An Assyrian is seen in the antitype as well as the type. The future man of sin, the Antichrist, is seen coming out of the northern division of Alexander the Great's kingdom, as it was divided among his four generals following his death. The northern division was the old kingdom of Assyria, and this man is referred to as an "Assyrian" numerous places in Scripture [e.g., Isa. 14:25; 30:31; 31:8; Hos. 11:5; Micah 5:4-6].

For additional information on this man, refer to the author's two pamphlets, "The Great Image, Great Beasts.")

Following Christ's return, the Jewish people are going to look upon and receive the Lamb Whom they slew 2,000 years ago. In that day, *through believing*, they will apply the blood of the Paschal Lamb which they had previously slain. And through applying this blood — *through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ* — those comprising the nation will experience the death of the firstborn vicariously, *via the One Who died in their stead*.

Then they will feast upon the Lamb by not only His personal presence but through an assimilation of the written Word, which the Jewish people will carry to the nations of the earth (Isa. 53:1ff).

This is what the future holds for Israel and the nations during the Messianic Era, though many things must transpire first.

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