

Why Should We Care About Passover Today?

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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- **What is Passover? (the Book of Exodus, especially chs. 12–14)**
 - The pivotal moment in God’s struggle to deliver His people.
 - What do the symbols of Passover mean?
 - In the month of Aviv — the greening of the ears of barley in preparation for harvest — Israel was to go out of Egypt (Ex. 13:4).
 - The Pesakh — the lamb
 - Inspected for blemishes from the 10th day of Aviv until the 14th. Roasted whole. No bones broken. None left until morning. (Exodus 12)
 - Blood on the doorposts, applied with hyssop
 - Destroyer came at midnight (Ex. 11:4; 12:29) to destroy the firstborn of man and cattle
 - “ ‘For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and **against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments** — I am the LORD.’ ” (Ex. 12:12)
 - Pharaoh refused to acknowledge the LORD, neither to let Israel keep an appointment with Him nor to let Israel go from forced labor.
 - As a result of having to do that, the firstborn of Israel became LORD’s (Ex. 13:2).
 - Haste
 - Egypt told Israel to leave in haste that night for fear all Egypt would die (Ex. 12:30–33, 39).
 - Israel was to eat unleavened bread for seven days because they left in haste and traveled day and night until they camped at the shore of the Red Sea.
 - Bitter herbs
- Why are we to teach our children about plagues, blood, and death of animals and people 3,500 years ago?
 - “It is a Passover to the LORD, who **passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt** when He smote the Egyptians, but **spared our homes.**” (Ex. 12:27)
 - “Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for **by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out** from this place. And nothing unleavened shall be eaten.” (Ex. 13:3)
 - “You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is **because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.**’ And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, **that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth**; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year.” (Ex. 13:8–10)
 - This seems to be the meaning behind the greatest of the “Sh’ma!” — “hear and obey” — of Deuteronomy, the affirmation of God’s deal with the second generation of Israel after leaving Egypt.
 - “ ‘Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 **These words**, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall **teach them diligently to your sons** and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.’ ” (Deut. 6:4–9)
 - Don’t forget God when He delivers you to a Land you did not establish and inherit things you did not work for (vv. 10–13).
 - Don’t follow other “elohim” (Hebrew for “powers” or “gods”) (vv. 14–15).
 - Deliverance from Egypt and observance of God’s words is for our own good (vv. 20–25).
 - “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?’ 21 then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; 23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.’ 24 So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival,

as it is today. 25 **It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God**, just as He commanded us.”

- Does this mean that “observ[ing] all this commandment” makes us righteous? Doesn’t the Word say “all our righteous deeds are like a [menstrual] garment”¹ and “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”²?
 - *These are important questions to consider as we contemplate observance of Passover or any part of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.*
 - Amid giving His instructions, God says He makes us holy.³
 - *Righteous* means “morally right or justifiable.”⁴ God teaches us what is right and wrong.
 - *Holy* means “dedicated or consecrated set apart” for a purpose.
 - Making us holy is part of God’s adoption process for mankind.
 - “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. **11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Yeshua is not ashamed to call them brothers.** 12 He says, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.’⁵ 13 And again, ‘I will put my trust in him.’⁶ And again he says, ‘Here am I, and the children God has given me.’⁷ 14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Heb. 2:10–18)
 - “All have sinned” comes from a long discussion — all of Paul’s letter to the Romans — about the standing of Jew and Gentile in the assembly of God. Circumcision is the starting point for Romans 3.
 - “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the **works of the Law** “no flesh will be justified in His sight”⁸; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Yeshua Messiah for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; **23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Messiah Yeshua; **25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.** This was to **demonstrate His righteousness**, because in the forbearance of God He **passed over the sins previously committed**; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Yeshua. 27 **Where then is boasting?** It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from **works of the Law.** 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. 31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.” (Rom. 3:19–31)
 - “**Works of the Law**” (NASB), “works prescribed by the law” (NRSV), or “observing the law” (NIV) are translations of the Greek phrase *ergoun nomou* (εργων νομου,

1 Isa. 64:6

2 Rom. 3:23

3 Ex. 31:13; Lev. 20:8; 21:15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32

4 “Righteous” entry in Oxford American Dictionary, 2008.

5 Psalm 22:22

6 Isa. 8:17

7 Isa. 8:18

8 Ps. 143:2

Strong's Nos. 2041 and 3551).

- Paul uses this phrase extensively in his letter to the Galatians⁹, particularly in dressing down Peter for eating together with Gentiles except when the “those of the circumcision came to visit.”
- The translations show the common interpretation that *ergon nomou* refers to all deeds done according to the Torah.
- Contemporary Jewish writings, such as the commentaries and community directives in the Dead Sea Scrolls, frequently use a parallel Hebrew phrase *ma'asei haTorah* (מעשה התורה, Strong's Nos. 4639 and 8451) to “a community's distinct *halakhah*,” or judgments.¹⁰
- Some who subscribe to the “New Perspective of Paul,” which views Paul as a Jew who continued to live as a Jew after his conversion, see Paul's use of the phrase *ergon nomou* as referring to “boundary markers” that observably separated Jews from the rest of the world, namely keeping the Shabbat, eating only “clean” foods¹¹, and observing the “feasts of the LORD.” Some Jewish communities ruled that baptism was preferable to circumcision for converts who would be killed if they were found to have been circumcised during the period of intense persecution of Jews.¹²
- Yeshua called true children of Abraham to have righteousness that exceeds righteousness.
 - “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:17–20)
 - Yeshua expounds on this in Matthew 5–7, showing how “observing the Law” in letter only and not by the Word of God, from Whom the Law came, is the same as violation of the Law.
- Our children should know that the death of the firstborn of Egypt to force the change of ownership of Israel from Pharaoh to God, and through that transfer creating freedom¹³.
 - “Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD. But every first offspring of the donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘**What is this?**’ then you shall say to him, ‘**With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.** And it came about, **when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt**, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the firstborn offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’” (Ex. 13:11–15)
 - God's had to sacrifice Yeshua, His only Son, to redeem the descendants of the first man.
 - That was prefigured by God's command to Avraham to sacrifice Yitzkhak, “your son, your only son” and then the last-minute substitution of a ram.¹⁴
 - The congregation at Corinth had issues among the members with people seeking status over each other according to their ancestry or social position. Paul admonished them to seek freedom from esteem of others and rather seek the best source of self-esteem.
 - “Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. 22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought with a price; do not

9 Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10

10 McKee, J.K. “Works of the Law” FAQ entry at TNN Online. <<http://tnnonline.net/faq/w.html#Works%20of%20the%20Law>>

11 See Leviticus 11.

12 McKee, *ibid.*

13 James 2:10–13

14 Gen. 22:2, 12, 16

- become slaves of men.” (1st Cor. 7:20–23)
- The slavery in Egypt was not just physical bondage. It was spiritual, which Moshe learned and Israel had to learn over and over.
 - “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.” (Heb. 11:24–29)
 - “Didn't we say to you when we were in Egypt, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?'" (Ex. 14:12, as the army approached Israel camped by the Red Sea)
 - “Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. 2 The people therefore cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD and the fire died out. 3 So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them. 4 The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, 'Who will give us meat to eat? 5 **We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, 6 but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.**' ” (Num. 11:1–6; Israel had set out nearly a year after arriving at Sinai (2nd year, 2nd month, 20th day per Num. 10:11))
 - The same spiritual bondage of Egypt exists today and will persist until Yeshua returns.
 - “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘**I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,**’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 **He who overcomes,** I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ” (Rev. 3:14–22)
 - God set us free from a vain existence by and through the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” to follow His lead and bring His “light” — His message of reconciliation and righteousness — into the world.
 - “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 **Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.** 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. 18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 **WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;** 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.” (1st Pe. 2:13–25)
 - True freedom comes from walking away from a worthless, aimless life and toward the true meaning of life. Paul had to remind the congregation in Corinth that freedom in God does not

mean freedom from morality, especially concerning behavior that even those “far away” from God can see as not proper.

- “Your **boasting** is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 **Clean out the old leaven** so that you may be a **new lump**, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Messiah our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the **leaven of malice and wickedness**, but with the **unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**” (1st Cor. 5:6–8)
- “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Yeshua in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 27 Therefore whoever **eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner**, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must **examine himself**, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself **if he does not judge the body rightly**. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.” (1st Cor. 11:23–32)