



Bible Studies on The Feasts of Israel

by David J. Born



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Foreword to the 2017 edition:

Much has changed in our ministry since these companion editions were published. So I thought I would take this opportunity to update the reader on what is going on in the LC-MS within Jewish missions.

In 1973, at the encouragement of Rev. Bruce Lieske, their pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia submitted a memorial to the 1973 convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, titled "To Facilitate Gospel Proclamation among Jews." The synod ultimately referred this issue to an ad hoc committee, headed by Dr. Erwin J. Kolb then the Executive Director for Evangelism of the LC-MS. You can find these and related documents in Witnessing to Jewish People by Bruce J. Lieske.

This beginning grew into what is now Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism (LIJE), founded in 1981. Rev. Lieske became its Founder and first Executive Director, and LIJE became the first mission society outreach of the LC-MS since World War II. There are 6,000,000 Jewish people in the United States, accounting for 45% of world Jewry.

To minister to this community, we help prepare congregations for ministry to Jewish people through preaching, teaching, writing and workshops while developing branches that are active and intentional in evangelism to the communities where God has placed them. We affirm and seek to be faithful to St. Paul's proclamation, "***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile***" (*Romans 1:16*).

The vision of LIJE is two-fold:

- First, LIJE seeks to engage in intentional evangelism within every significant Jewish community in the United States, sharing Y'shua (Jesus) with all people and especially the Jewish people.
- Secondly, LIJE seeks to connect congregations for training in evangelism and to help our churches understand the Jewish roots of their faith.

These companion books were written to help facilitate those goals with the expressed goal of opening mission branches in every city in the United States with a population of 20,000 or more Jewish people. There are 39 such areas in this country!

When these books were written, I was a fairly new believer, having come to faith in 1991 through the ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church in Denver, and began my ministry with a Jewish outreach organization in Denver, CO, called Menorah Ministries where I was serving as a volunteer missionary on the campus at the University of Colorado. By 1996 I was attending Concordia Seminary and had not heard much about the existing Lutheran mission to the Jews when I met Steve Cohen. He was then the field counselor and advisor to LIJE. In 1996 he left Jews for Jesus and came full-time with LIJE and

moved to St. Louis. We worked together to found The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, which was ostensibly intended to be a missionary training center, working with LIJE. But it ended up effectively operating as a competing mission to the Jews, causing a lot of confusion within our church body. So Steve and Bruce decided to separate their work. Steve left the ministry of LIJE but continued to operate under LIJE's street name of "The Apple of His Eye."

Because of all this confusion, LIJE determined to open new mission branches under the name of "Burning Bush Ministries" to distinguish itself from Steve's new ministry, and in 1999, opened a new branch of mission in Detroit, MI, the first of "Burning Bush Ministries."

However, two branches of ministry were still open, St. Louis and New York, operating under the "Apple of His Eye" name. Both branches were attached to messianic-Lutheran congregations, Congregation Beth El in Queens, New York, and Congregation Chai v'Shalom in St. Louis, where I have the privilege of pastoring.

Congregation Chai v'Shalom was founded in 1998, celebrating its first worship service on April 18, 1998, about a year-and-a-half since beginning mission work in St. Louis. Then, in 2005, Bruce retired and LIJE called me to serve as its second Executive Director, and has moved its offices to St. Louis, MO, where it continues a variety of ministries under the structure of LIJE, such as The Apple of His Eye, Burning Bush Ministries, and Aish HaEmeth, our Center for Jewish-Christian studies.

Unfortunately, in 2008 our ministry and congregation in Queens, New York closed as the missionary there took a call to serve a traditional Lutheran congregation. But, we have opened new mission stations in Atlanta and S. Florida, and continue to minister in Detroit, St. Louis and Orlando, and work with partner ministries to serve in the Ukraine and in Israel. We are actively working with congregations in the New York metro area to reopen our New York branch. **LIJE continues as a faith-ministry of the LC--MS, and as such relies on the regular support of those to whom God has called to sustain it with their gifts and prayers.**

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:35-38).

--Rev. Kevin Parviz, Executive Director

Nota bene: On page 126 is a dated schedule of Jewish holidays. While the information there other than the dates is a good summation, for a current holiday calendar, you should access the calendar on our website at www.lije.org.

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PREFACE

A series of monographs of Bible studies on the Old Testament Festivals of Israel was commissioned and published by the Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1983 to 1988. Studies on the five major festivals commanded in the Torah, (Passover, Shavuoth, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkoth) were written by Rev. David J. Born. The studies on the two most important traditional festivals of Hanukkah and Purim were written by Rev. Kearny L. Frantsen.

For a number of years, until supplies were exhausted, the monographs were offered to the Church through the Synodical Board for Evangelism Services. Instead of reprinting them, the Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People, now under the Board for Mission Services, felt that it would be more helpful to edit them, add worship material, and publish them in one volume. David J. Born undertook this task, and the result is this work, published in 1994.



The Task Force, being first convened by the Board for Evangelism Services in 1974, was busy for years producing materials and workshops designed to sensitize and train congregations of the Missouri Synod in the area of witnessing to

Jewish people. When the Task Force moved to the Board for Mission Services in 1989, the focus shifted to placing missionaries to Jewish people in the field. Since that time, five mission fields have opened: in New York, Chicago, Florida, and two in Southern California. In order to foster these various endeavors and to identify interest in Jewish evangelism across the Synod, the Task Force has sponsored yearly training events in Jewish Evangelism since 1990.

The old filmstrip prepared by the Task Force in the 1970s (still available through the Task Force) which made the case for the necessity of Witnessing the Gospel of Jesus to Jewish People, was entitled "The Apple of His Eye." When the training events first began in New York, this Task Force thought that this would be an ideal title for those events. Later, the "appleation" was applied to ongoing work in the various fields, so that today, "Apple of His Eye" stands for all the work the Synod is doing in Jewish evangelism.

Rev. David J. Born, the editor of this work, and the author of most of it, has been a member of the Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People since 1988, and is currently its chairman. His twenty years of parish ministry in predominantly Jewish areas of New York City, as well as his childhood home in a predominantly Jewish area on Long Island, has given him a love for and an understanding of the Jewish people, along with a desire to spread the Gospel among them. Although Pastor Born has quite a few Jewish believers in Jesus as members of his congregation in Rego Park, New York, he sees a larger calling in facilitating work among Jewish People through the districts and boards of the Synod.

FOREWARD

As a reading of Rev. Bruce J. Lieske's manual on *Witnessing to Jewish People* (published as a companion volume to this work) will attest, Jewish people vary widely in their religious practice or lack thereof. From secular Jews who only identify with an ethnic group to the most observantly orthodox, we can make very few religious assumptions which will apply to all or even most Jewish people.

Perhaps the most important consideration most Jews have in common beyond their ethnicity is the observance of the Festivals. Even as nominal Christians will consider attending a church service on Christmas and Easter, so even the most secular Jews will observe at least some of the seven great annual festivals of Israel. Because of this, a knowledge of these festivals will be a helpful point of contact between the people of the Church and their Jewish neighbors.

Anti-Semitism throughout the centuries has trained Jewish people to be wary of the Christians among whom they live. They will assume that Christians have no knowledge of their traditions, nor attach any value to them. Many will be surprised and intrigued to find that not all Christians are alike either, and that some are knowledgeable of the Jewish customs and religion.

Of course, our interest in the Festivals of Israel must focus around a great deal more than simply being a basis of communication with our Jewish neighbors. Indeed, the festivals of Israel are given to us as God's people, be we Jewish or Gentile. As we will see in each of the Bible studies that follow, the festivals are full of messianic imagery and prophesy which are fulfilled by Jesus in profound ways. To study the festivals of Israel is to deepen the faith of the believer in Jesus that He is in every way the fulfillment of all of God's promises to Israel and to the world.

Moreover, it is simply a lot of fun to celebrate the Festivals of Israel. The life of the Church can become much more vibrant as the follower of Jesus adds these observances, sometimes joyful, sometimes awesomely solemn, to his expressions of worship and service.

Messianic congregations, where Jesus is worshiped in a uniquely Jewish way, are growing in strength and numbers. They are places where one can find the unique combination of Jewish worship among believers in Jesus. Once rare in the early 1970s, Messianic congregations are found wherever there are concentrations of Jewish populations around the world today. One of the strategies of Apple of His Eye, is to form Lutheran Messianic congregations in the various fields that are opened up. Although the primary purpose of Messianic congregations is to serve Jewish believers in Jesus who either want to follow their Jewish customs or feel uncomfortable in a traditional Gentile congregation, many Gentile believers in Jesus have found great joy and spiritual renewal by taking part in the sabbaths and festival worship of Messianic congregations. It is because of this interest that worship material is included with these Bible studies. As we gain knowledge of these festivals, it is natural that we will want to also experience them.

To this end, I offer these Bible Studies on the Festivals of Israel to believers in Jesus, Jewish and Gentile alike. I pray these studies will be as much a growing experience for the reader as it was for me as I prepared them.

--Rev. David J. Born
October, 1994





פסח



Chapter 1. PASSOVER

I. INTRODUCTION



In modern Judaism, Pasach or Passover is a term that reflects a week of observances which call to mind the events of the Exodus. The term derives from the sacrifice of individual lambs (Cf. 2 Chron. 35:7). A whole range of observances are included in this festival, but two chief parts which may originally have been separate festivals still retain their distinctive natures: the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the Seder meal of the Passover itself. The theme of the festival included spiritual renewal, fellowship and historical commemoration.

Exodus 5:1, 10:9 When Moses petitioned Pharaoh to let his people go, the initial purpose he had in mind was the ability of Israel to go out into the wilderness to keep a festival. Since the slaying of the Egyptian first-born by the angel of death who passed over the houses of the Israelites (hence the term "Passover") had yet to occur at this point in the Scripture, we see that there was already a festival in place which Israel considered of great importance prior to the events of the Exodus. Most Bible scholars believe that this was the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Since it may have been this festival which sparked the concern of Israel about their inability to worship the true God in Egyptian bondage, we can see why the two observances of Unleavened Bread and Passover are celebrated together. We could even say that Unleavened Bread was the historical setting of the first Passover.

The confusion resulting over the proximity and relationships between the two festivals is evident in the Second Century A.D. tractate *Pesahim* found in the Mishna. Likewise the Historian Josephus held that the proper term for the entire festival was "Unleavened Bread," but in two places qualifies such a statement by adding "...which is called Passover."⁽¹⁾

Luke 22:1-13 The New Testament also sees the two terms as being alternate names for this festival (v.1). In Jesus' day, the Passover meal was eaten in large groups of family and/or neighbors. Ex. 12:4 stipulates that neighbors of small houses can go together on a lamb, and in New Testament times this became standard practice, especially since the festival had become a pilgrimage event, and eating in large groups became a practicality. The Talmud prescribed a minimum number of ten in a group (*Pesahim* 7:13ff), and often groups were so large that only a portion of a sacrificial lamb as big as an olive was to be given to each member. Other non-sacrificial lambs were eaten as the meal in such cases. This serves as a basis for the "token" meal Christians celebrate as communion. As a token of the lamb sacrificed by the priests in the temple was given to each individual at Passover, so a piece of the bread and a sip of wine instituted as the body and blood of the Messiah Jesus was given to each participant. The head of each celebrating group was responsible for providing for the sacrificial lamb and the room for the meal. Since this was a pilgrimage festival in Jesus' day, His use (perhaps rental) of an upper room not belonging to Him was typical. After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., the

meal became the intimate family table affair it still is today. The sacrificial aspect disappeared (2) while the commemoration aspect became paramount, especially in the years of persecution when many Jewish people underwent identity problems.



II. PURGING THE LEAVEN

Exodus 13:3-8 Moses commands Israel to observe this festival in the first month, or the month of Abib (v.4). This month was later renamed Nisan. The remembrance of the Passover is within a context of a seven day period during which time leavened bread may not be eaten nor even be found in the possession of anyone in Israel (v.7). The reason given for this is a remembrance of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, presumably because the people left in haste and did not wait for their bread to rise. Nothing specific is stated about the nature of leaven, or of its spiritual symbolic significance, but it is clear that leaven is so odious to Israel and her God during this holy period that all forms of it are to be scrupulously removed from the people.

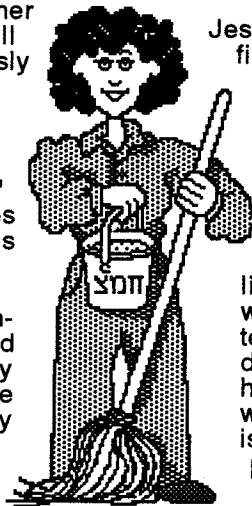
Preparation for the modern celebration of Passover likewise begins with a search for "*chametz*" --that which is leavened. Houses are cleansed and all *chametz* is burned.

Exodus 12:15 Here a differentiation between leaven (*seor*) and anything fermented or affected by leaven (*chametz*) is made. While no symbolic meaning is explicitly given here either, the symbol of sin is evident. Sin itself as well as that which is tainted by sin must be purged from our lives before we can worthily celebrate the feast remembering the Lord's deliverance.

Matthew 12:43-45 (Luke 11:24-26) Jesus speaks of the cleansing of our hearts in terms of houses being swept clean of evil. This is reminiscent of the practice of purging leaven from our houses. Jesus makes the point, however, that scrupulous sweeping is not enough. If there is nothing of God's Holy Spirit which dwells in the house swept clean, the evil spirit will return with seven others and the situation will be many times worse than it was

originally. The purging of leaven, then, must not be merely a legal observance in which we try with our own efforts to rid ourselves of evil, for whatever success we may have will only be temporary. As we pray "deliver us from evil;" we need also pray for the Kingdom and will of God to be among us. Quite apart from our attempts at righteousness, it is only through knowing Jesus that we can receive the pure and unleavened bread of life that comes from heaven. He sweeps our houses and fills them with His own righteous presence.

Matthew 16:5-12 The implied symbolism of leaven in the Old Testament is the basis of Jesus' teaching about the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus warns His disciples to beware of their leaven (v.6). Luke 12:1, a parallel passage, recalls Jesus specifying the sin of the religious leaders (Mark also includes the Herodians, [8:15]) as hypocrisy. Pride and hypocrisy are those germinal sins that have a way of creeping into one's life and growing imperceptibly until everything is bloated with sin. Paul also speaks of leaven in this way in 1 Cor. 5:6, and Gal. 5:9.



Jesus' disciples do not understand at first that He is not speaking literally about leaven and bread (v.7), and Jesus reminds them of the meaning of the feeding miracles, where the bread was a symbol of the pure blessings of God that were multiplied in a miraculous way. The shadows of doubts and the legalism that seemed like righteousness on the surface were characteristic of rabbinic teaching which could bloat and distort the word of God. The hypocrisy of straining at gnats when men's souls lie in the balance is a danger in every age when prideful men attempt to systematize the faith in human terms: this is the leaven of the Pharisees.

Matthew 13:33 Leaven is not always a negative symbol. As we will see in many of the Passover symbols, leaven can be good or bad depending upon the faith of the individual. In this parable the Kingdom of God is likened to leaven. The point being that the things of God in this world can appear as insignificant and as hidden as a few grains of yeast in a large quantity of meal. Yet the Kingdom grows and affects everything if we endure with patience even as bakers wait patiently for their dough to rise.

III. THE SEDER

What follows is a step by step study of the Biblical basis of the fifteen divisions of the Passover Haggadah, or service. In Appendix A, liturgical material is included that would reflect the observance of the Seder from the view point of a believer in Jesus.



1. KIDDUSH (Blessing) קידוש

Exodus 6:6-7 Four cups of wine are drunk during the Seder meal. This has traditionally been understood as arising from the four promises of God in these verses: "I will *free* you," "I will *deliver* you," "I will *redeem* you," and "I will *take you to be my people*." Rabbi Philip Goodman, in his *Passover Anthology*, summarizes the themes of Passover in three concepts: 1) the longing for freedom and redemption, 2) the survival of God's People, and 3) confidence in a divine solution to every problem.⁽³⁾ The first cup is drunk at the beginning of the celebration to remind us of that first theme of Passover: God as a God who frees His people. As the Lord released Israel from Egyptian bondage, so He frees all his people from the bondage of sin, death and the devil. We will see that in most of the Passover symbols, freedom is a consistent theme. Kiddush, of course, is not unique to Passover; it is the blessing which sanctifies the food and drink at every Sabbath and observance of the Jewish year. Wine has a dual nature in that it is a substance that can give us joy as we celebrate our freedom, and in excess and in the flesh it can be a source of great slavery of our bodies and minds. Like all of God's gifts, it can be a blessing or a curse depending upon the faith-relationship with God on the part of the individual. Here we praise God for the fruit of the vine which sanctifies us for a life of joy and not of bondage.

2. URECHATZ (wash) ורחץ

Exodus 30:17-21 The priesthood is commanded to wash hands and feet before entering into the tent of meeting. Cleanliness was stressed by Israel as we shall see when another time to wash hands just before the dinner is observed. But here the concern is not so much bodily cleanliness: this is a ceremonial washing. Washing with water has always been a symbol of cleansing from sin including the practice of Baptism arising out of the "*mikveh*"⁽⁴⁾ of rabbinic Judaism. That the priests observed this ritual cleansing is seen when the tabernacle was set up in Exodus 40:30ff.

Isalah 1:15-20 It is sin and not external dirt that causes unclean hands (cf. Matt. 15:11). Here the Lord accuses Israel of having blood on her hands (v.15). While murder and physical abuse may not have been the primary sin of Israel, her sins of omission have made her every bit as guilty. The instruction to wash requires a cleansing of the heart. God will not hear the prayers of His people when they have blood on their hands, no matter how hard they pray. Yet the washing is not effective unless the Lord does it. When we enter the waters of baptism, whenever we wash our hands, may we do so presenting ourselves to God who can wash us inside as well as out. Only He can deal with our blood-red sins and make us as white as snow. When we give up our rationalizations for our sin and receive God's heavenly reasoning, which reveals to us that cleansing through the blood of the Messiah is the only way to be truly clean and acceptable to God, then the Lord will act to forgive and renew. The cleansing is clearly through the gracious action of God (v.18). The free gift of God stands in contrast to the judgment that men would otherwise receive under the law. The rejection of such grace is not only unfaith, it is not even reasonable.

John 13:1-17 Most Jewish homes in Jesus' time were equipped with water for washing (cf. John 2:6). Those who had servants would perhaps have their feet washed, but would otherwise wash their own feet, as this was a humble task. Jesus takes this opportunity in the Passover that He ate with His disciples to wash their feet. It may have been the custom at the Passover to pour water over your neighbor's hands, but when Jesus removed His outer garments, got a basin of water and began washing the feet of His disciples, it was an awkward and embarrassing mo-

ment for them (v.8), for no free man would consider doing such a thing. Compare Jesus' dialogue with John the Baptist who is embarrassed to baptize Jesus (Matthew 3:14). John says that it is Jesus who should be baptizing him. At the last supper, Peter does not want Jesus to act as his servant, but he does not say, "I should be washing your feet," as the Baptist might have, he simply refuses Jesus' activity as unthinkable. Jesus then explains along the lines of Isaiah 1:18, discussed above. To be cleansed from blood-guiltiness, the servant action of God must do what we ourselves are unable to do. Moreover, we who follow Jesus must reflect His servant attitude in our own attitudes (vv. 14-16). For the disciple of Jesus, the Urechatz is fulfilled as the oppressed is encouraged and the defenseless is defended (Isaiah 1:16-17). This we seek to do by the power of the Holy Spirit even as we rejoice in our own cleansing by Jesus the Messiah.



3. KARPAS (Green Vegetable)

Genesis 1:9 The green vegetable has always been a symbol of the lush and abundant life created by God for the enjoyment of His people. The crisp, refreshing greens eaten at Passover are reminders of the new life we have of freedom from slavery to sin and death. Passover is a spring festival, running back to back with First Fruits (the day following the sabbath of Passover). As such, the green vegetable is a sign of hope and new life even in this world. As the grayness of winter bursts into a lively green, so spiritual refreshment is ours as a gift of God. Green plants were a sign of strength, life and productivity given to man by God (Hosea 14:8, Psalm 52:8).

Isaiah 40:6-8 Like so many of the Passover symbols, the karpas has a mixed meaning. The Bible often uses green grass and herbs to symbolize the temporary

nature of life in this world (*cf.* Psalm 37:2, Isaiah 15:6, Matt. 6:30). The flourishing plants that are so verdant and alive are here today and withered and gone tomorrow. It is this very temporary nature of life which frightens us; yet that fear drives us to trust the Lord of Life to renew our strength and give us security beyond the grave. His Word alone endures, and His Word in the flesh is Messiah Jesus, living among us (John 1:14). In that Living Word alone does our flesh have hope.

Isaiah 57:5 The flourishing life symbolized by the greenness of nature can also be the object of man's worship, instead of the God who created all life. This passage refers to the idolatry of fertility nature cults so often condemned by the prophets of Israel. Israel was frequently tempted to follow the practices of the Canaanites who worshiped life under green trees and personified fertility as the source of life. When Israel fell to such temptations, verdant nature was the cause of their downfall rather than a symbol of life from the God of Israel (*cf.* Deut. 12:2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4, 17:10; Jer. 17:2). So the karpas is a mixed symbol of new life and of the bondage of idolatry. Like all gifts of God, it is a blessing or a curse depending upon the faith of the individual recipient.

Psalm 126:5-6 At the Passover Seder, the green vegetable is to be dipped in salt water and eaten. The salt water is a reminder of the tears shed by Israel in slavery, and the salt of the Red Sea, the last obstacle in the way of their freedom. Freedom and new life are always purchased at a price. How would Israel even appreciate their freedom if they had not first cried bitter tears? How could the People of Israel rejoice in the deliverance of the Lord if they had not trembled in fear beside the Red Sea? This Psalm recalls God's sovereign act of deliverance on behalf of Israel from another oppressor: Babylon. The tears that they sowed in captivity blossom forth in a joyful reaping at restoration. When joy sprouts from tears, God is praised for his life-giving and life-restoring work.

Jesus knows our tears and fears too. He tasted the bitter gall on Calvary. He bore our sorrows on the cross. He sees us through the winter of our fear and appears at the Resurrection on the Day of First Fruits like a brilliant green bud; guarantee of a great and fruitful harvest to come, restoring our souls and giving life to our mortal bodies.

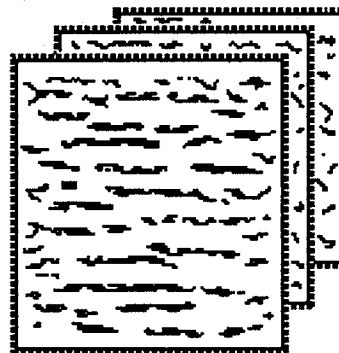
Revelation 9:1-6 The gift of new life from our God endures even to the end time. When the Abyss is opened to spew forth thick smoke and scorpion-like locusts upon the earth, the green plants are not harmed (v. 4a). These continue to be nourishment for God's own faithful at a time when death and destruction are everywhere. Those who have the sign of God upon their foreheads are exempt from the destructive insects and are free to enjoy the *karpas* miraculously salvaged for them. Those with the sign of God have rejected the mark of the beast, and this has caused them no end of hardship. Not only have they been the object of ridicule in the world, but without the mark of the beast they have not even been able to buy or sell in order to provide for their basic bodily needs (Rev. 13:16-17). Now, at the end time, the life of the flesh is withering and being eaten away, and only the people of God who have sown with many tears can reap the enduring fruit which God has preserved for them, while those who have eaten so freely of the fruit of this world cry out in misery for death to take them (v.6).

There are two significant parallels in these verses with Passover. The locusts are reminiscent of the plagues of Egypt which turned the tables so decisively in favor of the Israelite slaves. The other parallel is in the mark of God which exempts His people from the plague (v.4b). The blood of the sacrificial lamb was placed on the doorposts of the Israelites homes in an horizontal motion, and then vertically upon the lintel, forming a cross. The cross of Jesus is the sign under which our salvation is assured; the sign of atoning blood that averts the plagues that inevitably destroy the kingdom of this world. As we eat the *karpas*, may we remember that those who remain in a faith relationship with the Lord even to the point of death shall receive the crown of life.

4. YACHATZ יָחַץ (Breaking the Motzoh)

1 Timothy 2:3-6 This act speaks of mediation. Traditionally, three loaves of unleavened bread are bound together in a cloth. Some rabbis taught that the three motzohs represent the two levels of the universe: heaven and earth, with the middle motzoh representing some communication between the two. Other rabbis, particularly the Kabalists, have suggested that the successive layers represent the

Kohanim, the Levites and Israel.(5) The Levites were the priesthood and fulfilled the role of mediator between God and man. However, both the models include the same purpose for the middle motzoh: access between God and His people. At this point in the seder, the middle motzoh is broken. One half is left on the plate and the other is hidden until later. We believe that it is Jesus who stands between God and man (v. 5). The gulf that separates the two is sin, and no man is good enough to effectively reach across that gulf: to try and do so would exemplify the sin of pride. God provided His Son as our Messiah, anointed to bridge that gap at all costs, even the cost of His life. When the body of Messiah was broken the law was fulfilled and the separation was ended (v. 6).



Hebrews 9:15 The two functions of a priest are sacrifice and mediation. By becoming the sacrifice once and for all through the personal shedding of His blood, Jesus is now our access to God. As Jacob foresaw the need for a mediator in his dream about the ladder to heaven, so Jesus, the Son of Man, becomes that ladder of access to His Father (John 1:51). The entire book of Hebrews is, of course, an exposition of this very theme: Jesus, the middle motzoh broken for our offenses, standing as High Priest in the gap between God and His people, reconciling the two. As in 1 Tim. 2:3-4, the aim of this sacrifice is the fulfillment of the will of God to save all the lost who desire eternal life with Him.

The significance of motzoh, and the meaning of the two halves of the middle loaf will be discussed later under sections 8 and 12. After the middle matzoh is broken in two, one half is left on the seder plate while the other half, called the "*afikomen*" is wrapped in a cloth and hidden away until after the meal.

5. MAGGID (Telling the Story) מַגִּיד

The Maggid is the longest section of the seder, and includes a great deal of biblical and traditional material relating to the history and symbolism of the Exodus story.



a. The Bread of Suffering

Deuteronomy 16:3 The reason for three pieces of bread at Passover is to differentiate the festival from the practice at sabbath meals. Exodus 16:22 speaks of the children of Israel collecting a double portion of manna to last them over the sabbath, hence two loaves are blessed at the regular sabbath. The bread of affliction includes a third piece to underscore the special nature of this festival,⁽⁶⁾ and of course the bread of affliction is unleavened. As Israel eats the unleavened bread, she must remember the affliction of slavery. Yet all bread, be it leavened in leisure, unleavened in haste to flee slavery, or manna from heaven when there was no bread at all, is a gift from God who graciously preserves His people. In thankfulness for daily bread in all sorts of circumstances, Israel is to be mindful of the needs of others. As Jesus used the loaves to feed so many, so He uses what we offer to Him, little though it may be, to care for many more. The early church carried on in this tradition of hospitality to the strangers and the needy in their midst as well (Rom. 12:13).

So the Passover narrative begins: "This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry -- let him come and eat! Whoever is needy-- let him come and celebrate the Passover with us! Now we are here; next year may we be in Zion. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free!"



b. The Four Questions

Deuteronomy 6:8 Following the "Sh'ma," the great command for God's people to "hear," is the command to teach future generations in the ways of the Lord. At this point in the seder, the youngest son present is to ask four questions about the specific observances of Passover which

contrast those of most other meals. The father of the family answers these questions in his capacity as teacher, handing down to the next generation the reasons behind the practices of Passover. Here we might note that it was never God's intention for people to observe customs for their own sake, but only as a reminder of the truths of God and a remembrance of His mighty works in history. The four questions ask about the basic observances peculiar to Passover which are discussed elsewhere in this Bible study, but are worth reflecting upon here also as a summary of the Passover teaching traditions. After the four questions are asked, the father of the family expounds on the saving works of God, beginning with "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord in His goodness and mercy brought us forth from that land with a mighty hand and outstretched arm..." This ancient prose is perhaps one of the earliest parts of the haggadah dating back to pre-Maccabean times. It is taken from the Midrash on Deut. 26:5-8, and centers on its theme "Go and Learn."⁽⁷⁾

I. Philipians 1:6 The first question asks why on this night we eat only motzoh and not other bread. The obvious answer discussed in section 8 (Matzoh) is the haste with which the children of Israel left Egypt so they could not wait for bread to rise. Philo of Alexandria (c. 20-50 A.D.) suggests that another consideration is the incompleteness of the harvest in the springtime foreshadowing the complete harvest later in the year. While the leaven of the flesh is sin and pride which puffs up, the pure leaven of God completes the grain harvest in His time. In addition, Philo reflects a popular interpretation of his time:

"..food, when unleavened, is a gift of nature, when leavened is a work of art. For men, in their eagerness to temper the barley necessary with the pleasant, have learned through practice to soften by art what nature has made hard. Since, then, the springtime feast, as I have laid down, is a reminder of the creation of the world--and its earliest inhabitants, children of earth in the first or second generation must have used the gifts of the universe in their unperverted state before pleasure had got the mastery."⁽⁸⁾

We must but concur with Philo as we look around us in a universe tainted by the eager and unrestrained adjustments of pleasure-seeking men. The bread of Passover might remind us that the good work God began in us will come to fruition

in the pristine form God has intended only when we wait patiently and faithfully for it.

ii. Romans 1:24-25 The second question asks the reason for bitter herbs on Passover. The standard answer, to remind us of the bitterness of slavery, is dealt with in section 9 (Maror). Philo of Alexandria again adds a deeper interpretation from the first century:

"Those who naturally and genuinely repent become bitter toward their former way of life and are vexed with their wretched life, weeping, sighing and groaning because they have given over the most necessary part of time to that seductive and deceitful mistress, Desire, and have spent the prime of their youth being deceived by her when they ought to have renewed themselves and advanced in the contemplation of wisdom toward the goal of a happy, fortunate and immortal life."⁽⁹⁾

This certainly sounds like Paul reminding the Roman Christians what their former lives were and how futile are the works that proceed from a mind unrenewed by the Holy Spirit. For the believer, the *maror* is the bitter prison of guilt, and the Passover feast celebrates the reprieve of forgiveness and cleansing from guilt by the blood of Jesus. *Maror* reminds us of the guilt not to bend us low, but to underscore our joy in Messiah now that it is purged away.



iii. Deuteronomy 30:19-20 "Why dip green vegetables in salt water and bitter herbs in *charoseth* on Passover when nothing is dipped at other meals?" This is the third question. As we have already

seen, the life in the greens is tempered with the salt water of our sweat and tears. Again, we shall see that the bitter herb is dipped in sweet *charoseth* to remind us that the sweetness of freedom is accomplished through toil, pain and bitter suffering: a load too heavy for us carried by Messiah Jesus. The dipping of one element in a contrasting substance again brings to mind the dual nature of so many of the Passover symbols. This is a reminder that all the gifts of God are good when received in faith and evil when claimed by the flesh. Before Israel entered the promised land, Moses' parting words warn them that the land will be a blessing or a curse depending upon how it is received. Which it will be is not a law of God who gives, but a choice of man who receives. The blessing intended by the Passover or any religious observance is in the faith of the celebrant. Without a faith relationship, it will become a curse, exchanging a false confidence in a work done by man for a reliance on God to create a work of faith in man by His Spirit.

iv. 1 Peter 2:9-10 At the times of the earliest Passover observances, the Talmud prescribed reclining while eating as common practice for free men, while servants had to stand or take some other subservient posture.⁽¹⁰⁾ After the destruction of the temple, this was no longer a custom, so that when it was observed at Passover it became the subject of a most legitimate fourth question. The Babylonian Talmud in pre-destruction times records no such question, but it is common in all later seder observances. When we became people of God in Messiah, we received His mercy to become free people, holy people, heirs of the King of the Universe. We may recline at the Passover table with Jesus as did His disciples in the assurance that He has prepared a place for us to recline at the great eternal wedding feast because we have been freed from the sin that would make us unworthy and clothed with the wedding garments of the bridegroom's righteousness. In a practical sense too, we so often are harassed by the busy schedules we keep so that there is no time to relax and eat with our families. Jesus frees us from being prisoners of time when we are in haste, to love and obey Him. With guilt removed and faith that God accomplishes His work through his people, we can genuinely recline on the strong arms of the Lord and partake of His mercies together with our families at leisure.

c. The Four Sons

The tradition of the four sons developed sometime after the 6th Century A.D. and first appeared in the Jerusalem Talmud⁽¹¹⁾ as an adjunct to the four questions. As the questions reflect the children's need to know the Passover traditions, so there is a realization that not all children will have the same interest in learning and preserving those traditions. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9) reminds us that beyond the spreading of seed, the results depend upon the receptivity of the ground. So when relating the history of what the Lord has done for us, the effectiveness of the message also depends upon the hearer. At Passover, the Father recognizes that each child has a free will, and that their response and the value they attach to what is handed down to them will vary with the attitude and capacity of the individual. The Talmud⁽¹²⁾ states that the source of the tradition of the four sons is in the four passages in the Pentateuch which follow. It is striking how similar each son is to the different types of ground in the Parable of the Sower.

i. Deuteronomy 6:20-25 The first type of son is the wise and obedient son. He recognizes that his relationship with the Lord will be stronger if he is well-versed in the Word of God. He will ask what is the meaning behind all the customs, because he has learned that a relationship with God is not based on mindless observance of the rules. It is the meaning and spirit behind the customs which speaks of our relationship with God. The father is instructed to teach such a son in great detail. For such a son is good ground to yield a hundred-fold from whatever is invested in him.

ii. Exodus 12:26 The contrary son excludes himself from the celebration by asking the father "What is the meaning of this service to *you*?" Because he is detached in his interest, the reply should come in terms of what God means to the Father, for he cannot make his son believe. Certainly this is a principle to remember when bearing witness to the Lord's work of salvation. We cannot hope to explain to one outside the faith how wonderful it is to walk with God, neither can we produce faith in another. We must simply reflect the love and peace of God which we have found in Messiah in word and deed, and let that light shine before men. This son is like the hard ground that rebuffs the seed of God's word. Yet the sower spreads seed on this ground as well: the God who hardened Pharaoh's heart can also soften the heart of a scoffer.

iii. Exodus 13:14 The simple son does not realize what he is looking at as he sits down to the Passover table. He will only ask "What is all of this?" The father need not go into great detail as with the first son, but only needs to point out the important theme of the festival: that God frees His people from bondage. This son is like the rocky ground that will not allow for much depth, yet God blesses simple faith with his presence and protection. It is, after all, with the simple faith of a child and not with the learned understanding of a theologian that one must enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:15).

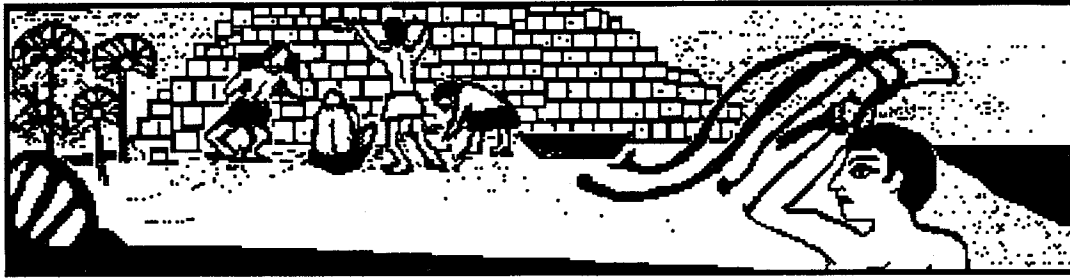
iv. Exodus 13:8 The child who is unable to ask does not have any understanding of the importance of God's love and blessing at all. With such a child, the father must take the initiative to tell him about how God delivers His people from bondage. Many innocent souls are lost in this world because the pleasures and cares of the flesh have entirely diverted their interest from God's truth. The sower must take pains to get the attention of such people who would not think to come and ask of their own free will.



d. The Lord's Promise

Joshua 24:2-4 The teaching of the history of Israel up to the Passover continues with the remembrance of the faithfulness of the Patriarchs who believed the promises of God. All Scripture must be understood in context, and so here, Passover is not seen as an isolated event but as a watershed in the history of a people who were carefully brought by their God from pagan origins to a life of faith and blessing. In his last words to Israel, Joshua reiterates their history as God's people lest they never forget their humble origins and their complete dependence on the Lord.

Acts 2:39 Peter was reflecting the tradition of the patriarchs when he proclaimed that God's promises are for all generations to believe. This section of the seder recalls the promises of God given to the fathers and traces their fulfillment in our own personal lives. We receive all Scripture in this way: handed down to us as the objective Word of God, it leaps to life from the page as we prayerfully read it and apply it to our lives.



e. The Text for Passover

Deuteronomy 26:5-8 The rabbis of the Talmud have greatly elaborated on these few verses that summarize the setting and events of the Passover. V.5 tells of the origins of Israel, as Jacob was saved from starvation by moving to the land of Egypt. It was there that Israel grew in numbers and prosperity. We too are instructed by the Word of God to make the kingdom of God prosper by the work we do in this world, a foreign and hostile territory. V. 6 tells of the sufferings of the people of Israel who invoked the jealousy of Egypt upon them by their success. The world also directs its enmity against us and seeks to ensnare us in a bondage to the flesh as we seek to see the Kingdom of God prosper. V. 7 recalls the sorrow of Israel in Egypt and how God's action on their behalf came in answer to their prayers. V. 8 tells of God's hand of deliverance accompanied by signs and wonders. The ministry of Jesus also included signs and wonders, not simply to get people's attention, but to underscore the fact that He came into the world for the purpose of delivering all people from their bondage to the flesh. Signs and wonders continue to surprise us as we share the freeing Gospel, against great odds, with the people of the world. That we should have the courage to speak and that the Word of God should have such great effect when spoken by our mouths are present signs of God's power and wonderful works.

Some rabbis have taught that each significant word in v. 8 (strong hand, outstretched arm, awesome revelations, miraculous signs, miraculous wonders) add up to ten; the number of plagues visited upon the Egyptians. So it is, then, that for every plague on the Egyptian oppressors, a sign of God's power was given to Israel.

f. The Ten Plagues

Ezekiel 33:7-11 The result of wickedness and godlessness is death. But such a death is chosen by the wicked, especially if they have been warned of the consequences of their evil lives. Though the wicked are God's enemies, however, He does not take pleasure in seeing them die. It is not God's desire that anyone suffer and die (Ezek. 18:32). When we, like Israel, stray from the Lord, we become His enemies, and we see in the cross the awful price that must be paid for us to again be God's friends. God paid that price in Messiah Jesus to reconcile the world to Himself because He desires the salvation of all people.

Likewise, when Israel saw the plagues on Egypt which resulted in their freedom, their joy was diminished by the price in human suffering the Egyptians had to pay for their wickedness. Again, the bitter-sweet nature of Passover comes through. A full or overflowing cup of wine is a sign of boundless joy, but at this time a drop of wine is taken from the cup for each plague on Egypt. By so diminishing the wine in the cup, Israel pauses in her celebration to regret the losses of her enemies.

The enemies of Jesus were among the people He came to save. He loved His enemies and prayed for them with His dying breath. So we are blessed when we are persecuted for the gospel's sake with a love from God that can counteract our natural human reactions to seek revenge or to gloat over the fall of our enemies. The Lord calls us to love our enemies and to join him in crying out, "Why do you want to die?"(v. 8) We pray for and encourage all enemies of God to choose to live by receiving the love of God who gave His Son into death that all might live in eternal peace with Him.



Of course we can learn even through our difficulties; so it was that each of the plagues of Egypt recorded in Exodus 7-12 revealed the power of God over the gods and objects of worship in that land, so Pharaoh and his people might know who was the true Lord of the Universe. The Nile and the sacred frog were objects of worship which themselves turned into plagues. Egyptians considered lice to be the supreme sign of spiritual pollution. Likewise the fly-god Zebub turned on his people. Cattle disease was a slap in the face of Hathor, the cow goddess, and Apsis, the bull god. Isis and Osiris should have had the weather under control, and Isis joined by Serapis were supposed to protect Egypt against locust: obviously they failed. The great sun god of Egypt could not prevail against the darkness at midday -- darkness such as the world fell into the day Jesus died.

The death of the first-born of all of Egypt was the ultimate price of freedom for Israel. God knows the sorrow of Egypt well, as it cost Him the same to free us from the oppression of sin and death at an hour of darkness. The joy we feel in the Resurrection is a very serious and awesome joy when considered in the perspective of the cross. When someone we love dies to this life, we are cheered by the hope of the resurrection, yet we sorrow still. At this point in the seder the plagues are named one by one and a drop of wine is taken from the cup for each. As we recall the plagues of Egypt and diminish the cup of joy, we remember the price our Savior paid to release us from death's grip forever.

g. Dayaynoo

Psalm 136 The *Dayaynoo* is a popular Passover song which closely parallels this psalm in both form and content. The context is thankfulness for the mighty acts

of God that are individually recounted, and the recurring refrain speaks of His enduring mercy. In this song, the refrain "*dayaynoo*" means "it would have been enough" and underscores the gracious acts of God. The song's structure can be seen in the following excerpt:

Had the Lord provided for our needs in the desert for forty years but not fed us the Manna, it would have been enough. Had the Lord fed us Manna in the desert but not given us the Sabbath, it would have been enough. Had the Lord given us the Sabbath but not brought us before Mt. Sinai, it would have been enough.

In each verse the exodus gift of God we said we should not have expected in the previous verse is given and another blessing we should not expect is mentioned in succession. How often we as God's people are too easily satisfied and do not ask for or expect the many other wonderful blessings the Lord wants to give to His children. The psalm not only gives thanks for the events of the exodus (vv. 10-15) but for creation, preservation and redemption. So in the *Dayaynoo* we joyfully give praise to God for more than deliverance from earthly enemies: we thank Him as well for our many blessings as children in the wilderness of this world miraculously redeemed and gifted by God.

Both the phrase of the psalm "His mercy endures forever" and the refrain from the song "it would have been enough" speak of God's grace which is more than we deserve or could expect. It is by grace that we are delivered quite apart from works of the law. The entire Passover underscores God's grace to His people, and the *Dayaynoo* is the hymn of praise that acknowledges this.

h. The Three Symbols

Acts 5:34-39 Rabban Gamaliel was a Pharisee whose wisdom and gentleness were honored by all in his day. He alone acted in faith among the accusers of the Apostles in the temple courts. He persuaded the angry members of the court to wait on God to see from Him whether or not these men were prophetic. From Gamaliel comes the rabbinic teaching that what comes from God lasts, and what is not of God eventually fails.

Every Passover, Israel recalls the teaching of Gamaliel: "He who does not explain the three essentials of the Seder has not fulfilled his Passover duty." For all the



length and complicated rituals connected with the seder, Gamaliel stressed the basic themes behind the whole celebration to keep the focus of Israel on the nature and work of God. The symbols are the Bitter Herbs (*maror*), the Passover Sacrifice (*pesach*) and the unleavened bread (*matzoh*).

i. Maror

Romans 8:1-2 The bitter herbs remind us of the afflictions of this world. Through suffering, the law of sin and death is preached to all creation so that some might turn to Jesus and live in accordance with His Spirit.

ii. Pesach

1 Corinthians 5:6-7 The Passover sacrifice is to remind us how the blood of the lamb caused the angel of death to pass over the houses of Israel. Paul reminds us that Messiah Jesus is our Passover, sacrificed for us so that the ravages of sin and death have passed over us. As the whole meaning of Passover is found in the sacrificed lamb, so the crux of the Gospel of salvation is found in the crucified body of Jesus. How wonderful of God to call Rav. Shoul (Paul), one of Gamaliel's brightest pupils, to so clearly set down for us the principles of Law and Gospel in his writings. Could it be that he saw this so readily because Gamaliel had so faithfully taught him to see Passover, and all the things of God, as a reflection of man's sin and God's grace?

iii. Matzoh

1 Corinthians 3:8 The other symbol of the Passover, the unleavened bread, is also very much on Paul's mind as he writes to the Corinthians. Because Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us, we must keep the feast by continuously purging out the leaven of malice and

wickedness from our lives by the power of God's Spirit. To complete the three-fold symbolism of Passover, Paul adds sanctification to the law and the Gospel.

Luke 9:2-3 When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God, He urged them to take nothing with them, not even any bread. This was to keep them dependent upon the Lord not only for guidance in their ministry, but even for their basic necessities of life. The traditional teaching about the matzoh at this point in the seder includes a phrase from Exodus 12:39, which states "...they were thrust out of Egypt and they could not tarry, nor had they prepared for themselves any provisions." Whenever God's people step out to follow Him, they must do so in faith that God will care for them, even if He must drop bread on them directly from heaven.

i. The Undying Message of this Night

Exodus 12:14 (Cf. Leviticus 23:14b, 21b, 31b, 41b). Moses taught the people of Israel that all the festivals were to be observed for all times. What does this mean for us today? As we proceed through the Seder, we must always apply the truths of God personally to ourselves. History is purposeless without a subjective bearing upon the individual in successive generations. Faithful men of God like Gamaliel and Paul would never teach about God's actions in history without showing how such actions affect us today. Thus the Passover is to be celebrated in all generations, for the edification of each person in each generation. The Rabbis taught that the phrase that follows from the Passover haggadah, based on the Mishna, is the pivotal passage of the celebration.(13)

In every generation it is each man's duty to look upon himself as if he personally had come out of Egypt. For we are commanded: "Tell your son in that day that it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt." It was not only our forefathers whom God saved; He saved us too. For it is written: "He took us out of there, so that he might bring us home, and give us the land as he had promised our fathers." (14)

Without applying the meaning of the Passover personally in each generation, there would be no point in the observance. So for us, the historical Jesus without a personal relationship of faith in him cannot suffice.



j. Hallelujah

Psalm 113 The Hallel psalms (113-118) are perhaps the earliest liturgical material to be codified into the Passover haggadah, sung by the Levites in the pre-Ptolemaic Passover rites of Israel in the days of Persian rule. Early too is the practice of reciting Psalms 113-114 at this point in the observance as a liturgical setting of praise for the events of the exodus, while the rest of the Hallel was recited later at the close of the seder to end on a note of praise. Reflecting upon the emancipating work of God, what better songs are there to sing than these two Psalms? A humble devotion of praise is the only response man can make to a God who has done so much. How can the Lord and Creator of the entire universe bend to raise the meanest of His creatures from the dust? All the religions of man cannot conceive of such a God; there is none like Him. Beyond His power, it is His personal love for each of us that makes Him great.

Vv. 7-9 make a wonderful companion to the Magnificat (Luke 1), where messianic references to exaltation of the poor and restoration of justice are found.

Psalm 114 All creation which groans as in travail awaiting the salvation of our God, leaps with joy whenever God's saving

hand is seen. Not only does creation rejoice in His salvation, but suspends its natural laws to allow the Lord to accomplish His work in all the earth. V. 3 reflects the Red Sea and the Jordan River giving way to God's people. Because of this exodus reference, the psalm is called the "Egyptian Hallel." The Deep water was not only seen as a barrier to ancient Israel, but often was feared as the abode of evil spirits. Jesus' command for the raging seas to be stilled (Luke 8:24-5), and his walking over the top of the water (Matt. 14:25ff) become greater than simple miracle stories: Jesus the Messiah has the power to deliver us from the abyss of evil just as the Lord led Israel through the sea, through the wilderness and through the Jordan to safety in the promised land in Moses' day.

The improbable fountain of living water flowing from the flinty rock (v.8) has become a sign of the Messiah at the Festival of Booths, and takes on sacramental overtones as Paul personifies the rock as Christ (I Cor. 10:4).

(k.) The Second Cup

Exodus 6:6 As mentioned above in the Kiddush section, four cups are drunk at the Passover, one for each of the four actions of God in this verse. The second cup recalls God's promise "I will free you from being slaves." As this action closes the Maggid, the longest section of the seder in which the Passover story is told, it is appropriate that it be punctuated with the "cup of deliverance." Some rabbis point out that it is also a "cup of judgement" when looked at from the Egyptian side of the story. So again, the cup which Biblically is a cup of joy (e.g. Ps. 75:8), can otherwise become a cup of suffering (e.g. Ps. 104:14-15), depending upon one's relationship with the Lord.

Romans 6:15-23 The freedom Jesus gives us is the freedom of choice. Slaves to sin, like slaves to Egyptian taskmasters, have no recourse. Freedom in Jesus gives us the ability to willfully become God's servants; servants of righteousness. As we yield our bodies to God's righteousness for sanctification, we find that He accomplishes His purposes through us quite apart from our efforts and without our undertaking of impossible burdens. Jesus took the burden on Himself: deliverance for us is the end of sin. Judgment is only upon those who do not choose to follow the Deliverer.

6. RACHTZAH רחצה (Washing the Hands)

Matthew 15:1-20 Washing was a ceremonial ritual in Israel as was seen above in section 2 (Urechatz). Here, just before dinner, common ideas of cleanliness would dictate a second washing of one's hands. By Jesus' time, even such ordinary practices had become codified as "traditions of the elders." The move from carrying out the spirit of the law to observing the law for its own sake was then and continues to be today the direction of rabbinic Judaism. Jesus' difference with the Pharisees was usually in this very area. When He healed on the sabbath, He was criticized as a law-breaker. His reply, "the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27), sums up Jesus' views on rabbinic Judaism rather adequately. So here, the Pharisees and teachers of the law feel justifiably upset with Jesus because He does not instruct His disciples in the traditions of the elders about washing before meals. Jesus points out the flaw in their traditions which will follow regulations to the letter even when it means neglecting their God-given responsibility to their parents.



Jesus then teaches His disciples that it is the loving presence of God in one's heart that makes one clean, and not any amount of outward show. Jesus' blood is the sacrifice which cleanses us spiritually so that we may enter God's presence and have fellowship with Him now and at the great banquet table in eternity. Here too, the emphasis is not in any outward preparation but that God declares to be clean what is unclean. If we trust Him, He cleanses us and prepares us to eat with Him always. As we prepare to receive the

body and blood of the Messiah which He first instituted at the Passover as a means to receive God's grace, we confess our sins and receive a cleansing of our souls from Jesus. As we wash our hands before the Passover meal, it signifies that we are cleansed through and through by the blood of the Lamb.



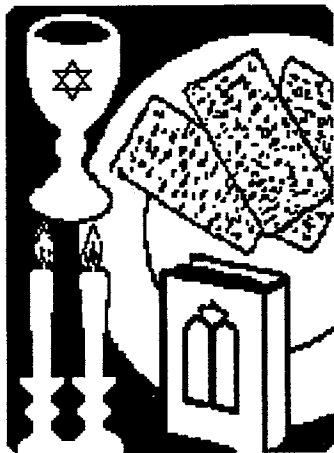
7. MOTZEE מוציא (Brings forth Bread)

Matthew 14:19 When Jesus saw the need to feed five thousand people with five loaves of bread, He did not pause to consider the impossibility of such a situation. Rather He went ahead and blessed the bread as any good son of Israel would do before supper. This standard blessing said before any meal blesses God who *brings forth* bread to feed His people. As Jesus gave thanks to His Father in heaven, and broke the five loaves, the bread was sufficient to feed all who were present. We can trust our Lord who clothes lilies in the field and showers manna in the wilderness to care for our every need as well. In the sacrament, the one body of Jesus broken for His people continues to suffice for us to this day with overflowing grace for as many as desire to receive Him. Let us bless the Lord for daily bread, and all good things we receive from His hand of bounty.

Exodus 16:1-12 After two months in the wilderness, there was not any meal left in Israel to bake bread. They complained to Moses, and began to remember their time in Egypt as the "good old days." For all their troubles in slavery, at least they had plenty of bread to eat in Egypt. When hardship comes, it is difficult to remember the former blessings of God, even when they were given in the recent past. It is because of the short memories of mankind that the Passover ordinance to "remember" is given. God promises to drop bread from heaven so that they will know that it was He who brought them out of Egypt (v.6). So when we pray "give us this day our daily bread," it is not only a prayer for sustenance, but a prayer for us to constantly be reminded of the mighty acts of God in history and in our lives.

8. MOTZOH מצה (Unleavened bread)

Exodus 12:33-34 At this point in the seder, the top and remaining half of the middle matzoh are broken and eaten. These fragments of unleavened bread may be dipped in salt which is a sign of God's covenant. In section II, on The Feast of Unleavened Bread, it was pointed out that leaven was considered a symbol of sin, and that the purity of the Passover sacrifice was to be maintained in the context of homes purged from leaven. The historical background for unleavened bread, however, recalls that it was because of the haste with which Israel had to leave Egypt that there was no time to wait for the day's bread to rise. The flat bread was taken with them into the wilderness. The bread of affliction, then, not only reminds us of the quick obedience to God's call, as was discussed in the Three Symbols of the *Magid*, but also underscores our slavery to time.



1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 In our modern world, time is a precious commodity indeed. There is so much that needs to be done, and so few hours in a day in which to do it. Time is part of the laws of the created universe which binds us and drives us, often quite unmercifully. Believers in Jesus have a different sense of time: because of the resurrection, we have the first fruits of timelessness and eternity as a down payment upon our everlasting life. The hurried pace of daily life is greatly tempered when a priority is set on our place in the eternal kingdom of God. What is more, by offering the Lord our time as a first fruit offering each day, the strength of His Spirit will organize and prioritize the way we spend our time and use what we have in a much wiser way

than we would otherwise be able to accomplish with our own strength in the flesh.

Matzoh, then, is a remembrance of the emergencies and rigors of living in this world. In another sense, as Jesus has proclaimed His return as one that comes like a thief in the night (v. 2), we need always be ready to follow Him at any time; to forsake our normal activities, symbolized by the baking of bread, and respond to His call and to as His agents whenever a situation requires it. Since we do the bidding of God by the power of His Spirit, we need not be anxious about how we use our time, as people in a worldly rat race might be. Jesus frees us from the boundaries of time for eternity, and so we may eat this matzoh in the prescribed way: reclining or at ease.

Though we are to be unconcerned with the pressures of time in the world, we must be prepared to move when the Lord directs us. People are busy in the world living as if there was no end to their time (v. 3). We must make sure that we are good stewards of the time God does give us in this world, though we need not fret about the lack of it.

Previously, bread was blessed in the usual manner. Because Matzoh is more than a substitute for regular bread, but is a symbol of the rest we have from the slavery to sin and the laws governing the physical universe, it epitomizes the theme of Passover. Therefore, a special blessing is said over the Matzoh at this point in the seder to underscore the importance of this symbol, of which more will be said in section 12.

9. MAROR (Bitter Herb) מרור

Exodus 15:22-26 The bitter herb is to remind God's people of the bitterness of slavery to the flesh and the law of sin and death. It is never God's will to make His people bitter, but He wants them to remember bitter times so they will know that it is He who delivered them. It was not long after Israel was freed from Egypt that they had another bitter obstacle to confront. They had no fresh water, and the water they found was brackish. They called the place Marah, or bitterness. The Lord showed Moses how to make the water sweet by throwing a branch into it. Obviously there is no quality in a branch that would do such things, it was the action done in obedience to the word of

God that produced the results. It was not God's will for there to be bitter water; its bitterness was a malady, which by correcting it, the Lord used to show Himself to be a "healer." (Elisha also "healed" bad water by sowing salt, a sign of the covenant. 2 Kings 2:21)

The bitterness of the water, like the bitter herb, shows us that the Lord heals us of all conditions that are not in His will for us, be it sickness, slavery, fear or need. For the same reason, Jesus, healing the man blind from birth (John 9:1ff), proclaimed that the malady was not a result of any particular sin, but rather an opportunity to give God the glory for this healing.

Proverbs 27:7 The bitter herb is to be dipped in the sweet charoseth mixture at this point in the seder to emphasize the bitter-sweet contrast which we have already seen is a basic theme of Passover. The bitterness of so many of our daily experiences point out our weakness and inability to control our lives. Those who eat well disdain even the sweet things in life because of their plenty, which they take for granted. The hungry man will appreciate even the bitter herb which will taste sweet to him. The bitter herb teaches God's people to be humble; to remember their dependence on God who satisfies the desire of every living thing.

Isaiah 5:20 In pronouncing this woe to the wayward Israel of his day, Isaiah speaks a word of God's judgment to our world as well. It is the daily experience of the Christian to hear the people of the world call what is good evil and what is evil good. In the same way bitterness and sweetness are confused. For those who taste the bitter herb at Passover, a half-an-egg portion, will not confuse this flavor with the sweet mixture of charoseth, even though they are eaten together! So it is important for us to properly distinguish what is God's word of judgment for us and for the world, and what is His word of promise. The bitterness of our life in this fallen world may teach us many things, but the most important lesson we must learn is that bitterness is preached by the law of sin and death which can only condemn us. As the herb is immersed in the charoseth, so we must immerse our lives of tears and pain in the sweetness of Jesus, our deliverer. The sweetness of the Passover celebration culminates in the good news that while we were yet sinners the Messiah died for us to deliver us from eternal bitterness.

Exodus 12:8 Philo of Alexandria points out in his exegesis of this passage that the regret we feel over wasting our time in carnal pursuits causes us bitterness. We have seen this above when we considered the first of the four questions (section 5.b.1.) He goes on to say:

"And so, we who desire repentance eat the unleavened bread with bitter herbs, that is, we first eat bitterness over our old and unendurable life, and then we eat the opposite of overboastful arrogance through meditation on humility which is called reverence."⁽¹⁵⁾

Motzoh, then, the symbol of time (see section 8), is associated with the bitter herb to reflect the sorrow of time wasted in carnal pursuits. This regret persists even when forgiveness is effected through a sacrifice.

To drive home the symbol of bitterness and to be in sympathy with all those whose lives are embittered through the godlessness of the world, the maror is eaten in haste and without reclining at ease.



10. KORECH כֹּרֶךְ (Combining the Symbols)

a. Charoseth (mortar)

Exodus 1:13-14 Charoseth is a mixture of sweet fruits, spices and wine which is designated as a reminder of the mortar with which Israel was forced to build for the Egyptians. While this, like all the other symbols of the Passover, bring up memories of bitter times of slavery, charoseth is sweet and pleasant tasting. Since Adam, man has been cursed to work for a living, yet in laboring, we find a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. The Scripture teaches in many places to find contentment in doing honest and industrious work. Regardless of the evil conditions Israel endured in Egypt, there was nothing wrong with the hard work they did. In fact the work prepared them for the arduous journey to the promised land, where survival itself was a full-time occupation. The sweetness of fulfillment in doing God-pleasing work tempers the bitterness of the world that would enslave us, and

teaches us to look for redeeming factors in the most hopeless of situations. Charoseth is a reminder to us that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord (Rom. 8:28).

1 Peter 2:5 If we are freed from the hard work of building cities for the Egyptians, it is to voluntarily enter into a contract with our God to build Him a temple of living stones, based on Jesus, the once-rejected corner stone. The sweetness of fellowship (cf. Ps. 133:1) with God's people is the mortar Jesus builds with. The work of the kingdom is hard work, but not burdensome work. We have been freed from the yoke of our oppressor; now our work is done with the power of God's spirit. Peter uses the passive: "be yourselves built up," to remind us that the work is the Messiah's, and that work was completed already for us on the cross.

We are gathered, then, as the family of God, cemented to one another with the love of Jesus. It is our joy to be about the Father's business as we build each other up in the household of God. Our lot is all the sweeter when we consider that our work will never be shaken as it is built on the Rock.

b. Hillel's Sandwich

Numbers 9:11 Hillel (died c. 10 A.D.) took this passage most literally, and taught that the bottom motzoh should be broken and combined with the *maror* and the *charoseth* in a kind of "sandwich" to fulfill the commandment.

John 13:21-30 Korech would no doubt have been a common practice by the time Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples. The "sop" as this combination is often called, was a sign of special favor, forgiveness or love when dipped and given to someone at the table. In doing this for Judas Iscariot, Jesus was already presenting to him an offer of unconditional forgiveness such as He spoke for His executioners the following afternoon. Per-

haps this is what Jesus had in mind when he taught us to leave our offerings before the altar in order to make peace with our brothers (Matt. 5:23-24).



11. SHULCHAN ORECH שלחן עורך (The Festival Meal)

The meal is served. The first course should be a meat dish in commemoration of the "*hagigah*" offering which was made in temple times. This should be meat from the shoulder of an animal because God redeemed us with an outstretched arm (Deut. 26:8). Also on the seder plate is a roasted shankbone "*zeroa*" which is a token of such sacrifices. Since the bone was a sign of God's outstretched hand, the bones of the pesach were not to be broken (Ex. 12:46). John 21: 36 shows how the limbs of God, outstretched to redeem us in Jesus, were also not broken even in death.

The second course is an egg dipped in salt water. The egg is the traditional food of mourners. Once more, the festival atmosphere is tempered with the sadder aspects of the observance.

In Aramaic, the word for egg is "*beah*," which also means "desire." So the egg is present to remind us that God *desired* to redeem us with an outstretched arm. Since temple times, the egg has often been thought of as a symbolic substitute for the Paschal sacrifice, even as the chicken is sometimes used as a substitution for the sacrifice of Yom Kippur. If indeed the egg is symbolic of sacrifice, it could also be noted that new life comes from eggs, making it a fitting symbol of resurrection as well.

Moderation is to be exercised at the meal. Ancient rabbis taught that if there was not sufficient appetite for the afikomen to be eaten after supper, so that it had to be forced down, then the intention of the Passover had been violated.



12. TZAFUN ("Desert") תצון

Luke 22:14-20, Matthew 26:26 and Mark 14:22 say that while Jesus was eating the Passover meal, He blessed the bread and distributed it to His disciples as His body, followed by the cup. Luke reverses this order which might indicate that the institution of both elements took place in proximity during the Last Supper. Paul says that the blessing of the wine was "after supper" (1 Cor. 11:25), and taking the two elements together it is reasonable to assume that the bread was also blessed after supper. This would be consistent with the symbolism of the middle motzoh (see section 4) which was broken in two at the beginning of the seder as a symbol of the mediator between heaven and earth. At that point, half of the middle motzoh was hidden in a napkin, which we could see might represent Jesus being shrouded and hidden in the grave for three days. At the end of the meal, children traditionally search for the hidden piece of motzoh and are rewarded when it is found. The disciples, the children of God, are rewarded indeed when they find the redemption which is in the body of the Messiah. This piece of motzoh, called "*afikomen*," or left-over, is to be broken up and distributed to all who are present at the meal. Jesus, the stone the builders rejected, the righteous remnant of Israel, is the Messiah, found not among the dead, but among the living. He distributes Himself among us today and calls us His body, even as we receive His body broken for us.

Tradition dictates that the *afikomen* is the last thing to be eaten at the seder, and only the last two cups of wine may be drunk after it. In concluding the Passover with this bread, Jesus said that He would not eat it again until it finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God (v. 16). So we continue to receive the *afikomen* of Jesus, becoming in a sense a manifestation of God's kingdom in the world. Jesus promises us that He will come in and sup with us if we answer His call (Rev. 3:20). The ultimate fulfillment of the Passover, of course, will be the time when we actually celebrate the heavenly banquet with Jesus on the last day.

Zechariah 12:10 As Jesus called the piece of motzoh His body, we are reminded that there are even some physical properties of the motzoh that correspond to Jesus' body. To ensure the even baking of motzoh, it is pierced through with pin-sized holes. We have

every reason to believe that this was true of the motzoh of Jesus' day. When the new covenant is made, one based not on law but on mercy and prayer, the joy of that new relationship is tempered with the bitterness of sorrow when the people of that covenant look upon the one who was pierced by their sin. John sees this as a Messianic prophecy fulfilled not only spiritually, but even physically when Jesus' body is pierced by a Roman spear (John 19:37). Some have observed that the pierced holes are in rows on the matzoh, creating strips of dark crust resembling bruises. The stripes and bruises of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 might be seen here. Perhaps this would be pressing the symbol a little, but the visual resemblance is not hard to distinguish.(16)



13. BORECH ברה (Grace after the meal)

Psalm 126:1-4 Thanksgiving after the Passover meal traditionally begins with the recitation of this psalm. The relief of freedom is so wonderful that it seems like a dream. The psalmist recalls the great things the Lord has done in posterity, but realizing that this could be as unreal as dreams in the present time, he personalized the works of God: "The Lord has done great things for *US*" (v. 3).

The thanksgiving prayer continues with a four-fold blessing called the "*Birchas Ha Mazon*." The first part is traditionally ascribed to Moses, and thanks the Lord for preserving Israel with manna in the wilderness. The second, ascribed to Joshua, thanks the Lord for the promised land. David is said to have praised God for calling Israel to be His own people, and Solomon is said to give thanks for the temple. We are thankful for these things too, as they are important symbols of God's protection as we wander through this wilderness, God's promise of eternal life in His kingdom, God's calling of believers to be His children and heirs, and God's Spirit indwelling the temples of our hearts.

Psalm 145:16-18 The thanksgiving prayer continues at great length, emphasizing God's mercy and compassion, concluding with the words of this psalm. Satisfaction and fulfillment can only be received from the hand of the Compassionate One. The

final phrase of the prayer is "the Eternal One will bless His people with peace." To this day, the New Testament community shares the Lord's peace as a context of receiving the body and blood of Jesus.

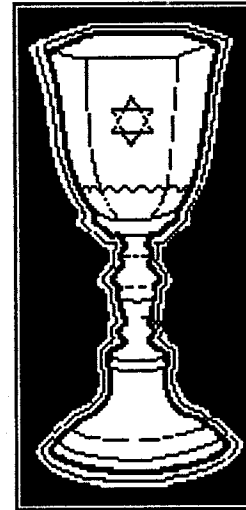
a. The Third Cup

1 Corinthians 11:25-26 The third cup of wine drunk at the seder as we have seen above is the cup of Redemption (see Section I, Kiddush). This is the cup drunk after the supper wherein we were to remember the God who redeems with an outstretched arm. It was this cup, after supper, which Jesus took and blessed as the new covenant in His blood and gave it to His disciples. Since it is Jesus' blood which was poured out for us when He stretched out His arms on the cross to redeem us, it was most appropriate that Jesus consecrated this particular cup to contain the blood which seals our redemption.

Jeremiah 31:31 The promised new covenant is sealed not with the blood of animals, but with the personal blood of Jesus. This covenant is unlike the one made with Israel after the exodus in that it is based on a relationship of faith between God and man secured by the faithfulness of Jesus. The covenant is made in the same way, however: by blood. Israel was warned not to consume blood because the life is in the blood. In the new covenant Jesus gives us His blood to drink precisely because we may then participate in His life and work of redemption (*cf.* 1 Cor. 10:16).

Exodus 12:22 Scripture teaches us that there is no atonement without the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11, Heb. 9:19). Though the Israelites were the victims of Egypt, they were still sinful and often unfaithful people who deserved punishment as well. The blood of an unblemished lamb was the substitute for the shedding of their own blood. This blood would satisfy the law of sin and death and cause destruction to pass over the houses of Israel. So to avert the doom which befell Egypt, blood from the Pascal lamb was daubed on the doorposts and lintels of the houses with a bunch of hyssop reeds. Hyssop was a symbol of cleansing. Brooms of hyssop swept houses clean of leaven; so also the psalmist prays for cleansing from sin with the words "purge me with hyssop" (Psalm 51:7). The bitter gall offered to Jesus on the cross was lifted on a reed of hyssop (John 19:29) again bringing together the

hyssop and the blood to cleanse sin and avert eternal doom. Even the motion of placing the blood on each side of the door and on the lintel form the sign of a cross; the mark of God upon his children redeemed by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.



b. The Fourth Cup

Malachi 4:5 The Old Testament closes with the promise that Elijah will return as a forerunner of the messianic age. This promise is taken very seriously by the devout in Israel. The fourth cup recalls the promise of God to take us as His people (see Kiddush). The Lord literally took Elijah up into heaven as His own, and it is the hope of those who take the word of the prophets seriously that we shall also be physically taken into God's kingdom at the last day.

The fourth cup is poured, but before it is blessed, a door to the outside is opened for Elijah as a testimony to Israel's faith that Messiah is still coming. A place of honor is also set for Elijah at the seder table, should he appear. Children participate by opening the door and looking for Elijah. Psalms of praise follow and the fourth cup is drunk in the joyful anticipation of God taking us to Himself.

Matthew 17:9-13 Elijah appeared with Moses on Transfiguration Mountain to witness God's proclamation of Jesus as His Son. Afterwards, the disciples question Jesus about the coming of Elijah. Jesus' reply here, and in Matt. 11:14 indicates that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of that prophecy. Despite disclaimers by John the Baptist that he

was not the Prophet (John 1:21) reincarnate, Jesus indicates that the message and ministry of Elijah were carried on by the Baptist. As John the Baptist was the one Isaiah predicted would be the forerunner of the Messiah, he certainly plays the part of Elijah as he preaches repentance. This is a good figure for Passover: to receive the Messiah, the old leaven of sin must be swept clean from our lives. Repentance is the message which prepares hearts to receive a Savior.

As Jesus identifies the sufferings of the prophets including John the Baptist with His own impending sufferings (v. 12), there is a certain sense in which Jesus Himself embodies the witness of Elijah who preached the Kingdom of God, healed the sick and raised the dead. Jesus says that Elijah does come to restore all things (v. 11), and that indicates a role of more than a prophet: complete restoration is the work of the Messiah.

Believing Jesus' teaching that Elijah has already come (v.12), we now await neither Elijah nor the Suffering Servant. We fling wide the doors of our hearts to receive the indwelling Spirit of Jesus, even as we anticipate His coming again in glory as Lord of all.

Matthew 27:46-49 When Jesus cried out "Eli, Eli..." from the cross, some of the bystanders believed that He was calling upon Elijah. On this day after the Passover, perhaps the fourth cup and the open door were still fresh in their minds. If Jesus thought He was the Messiah, then He might make one last effort to be heralded by the Prophet and so save His life and ministry. But rather than being saved by Elijah, we have already seen that Jesus taught that He would have to be rejected and suffer like the prophets. Indeed He would have to drain the cup of suffering to the bitter dregs before He could offer us the cup of salvation.

Lamentations 3:66 The prayer offered at the fourth cup of the seder looks for God to pour out His wrath and judgment on the godless kingdoms of the world and the persecutors of Jacob (Ps. 79:6-7, 69:25). "Pour out your rage upon them and let your fury overtake them. Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of the Eternal,"(14) it goes on to say. If the enemy is sin and death, then Jesus has answered this prayer. But if the enemy be the people of the world, we see a wonderful contrast to the sentiment of

this prayer: Jesus forgave those who crucified Him. Here the purpose of Elijah's return is fulfilled: hearts of fathers and children are turned toward each other (Mal. 4:6). When Jesus defeated the last enemy, He created peace between us and the Heavenly Father.

Revelation 3:20 As Israel opens the door at the Passover that Elijah might come in, so we can open the door of our hearts that Messiah Jesus might enter and celebrate the supper with us.



הלל

14. HALLEL (Psalms of Praise)

Now that the festival is almost over, a joyous outburst of praise in Psalms and songs commences. The Hallel Psalms 115-118 are recited, as is 136 with its glorious refrain "for His mercy endures forever." The theme of these psalms reminds us to put our undivided trust in the Lord, who will ever bless us (Ps. 115), proclaims God's redemption which all our gratitude can never repay (Ps. 116), encourages all the world to join us in praising the God of Israel who is Lord of all nations (Ps. 117), and expresses our gratitude to the Lord for delivering us from our enemies and opening the gates of His kingdom to us (Ps. 118). The Great Praise (Ps. 136) is chanted antiphonally, with the assembly repeating "Kee l'oh-lam chas-doh" after each verse. Then a lengthy prayer is offered expanding on each phrase of the prayer:

"Eternal God from beginning to end
beyond our power to praise
we behold your tender mercy.
All the world shall serve you
honoring your holy name
with hymns and psalms."

After the Hallel, the fourth cup is blessed and drunk.

15. NIRTZAH נרצה (Conclusion)

Matthew 26:30 Many joyful traditional Passover songs follow, including "It Happened at Midnight" on the first evening of Passover, and "This is the Passover Festival!" and "To Him it is Fitting, To Him it is Due" on the second evening. Other options are "Ki Loh Na-eh" (To Thee, To Thee), "Ah-dir-hoo" (God of Might), "Who Knows One?," and "Chad Gad-yo" (An Only Kid). This latter song, first codified in the Darmstadt Haggadah (14th C.), seems light hearted in the portrayal of a number of animals who devour each other in succession, but is meant to portray the successive kingdoms of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Saracens who all persecuted Israel, the kid, but never destroyed her though they themselves were destroyed. The resiliency of God's people through countless trials is the closing theme of the Seder.

Jesus sang a hymn with His disciples after the Last Supper, and then went on to the Mount of Olives to pray. While some were celebrating the joyful conclusion of the feast, Jesus was about to begin the work of fulfilling the feast in His body.

Isaiah 35:10 The Seder concludes with the song "L'sha-nah ha-beh-ah Beer-roo-sha-lai-eem" (Next year in Jerusalem),

offering the hope of the fulfillment of the Passover in the Messiah to take place soon. Israel hopes in these latter days to restore the fortunes of Zion and rebuild the temple; to gather her people in *diaspora* once again in the holy city. The people of Messiah Jesus recognize the importance of Jerusalem too, but not as an end in itself, but as that which foreshadows the completion of the kingdom of God. Isaiah prophesied that when Messiah ransoms His people, which we know He did by His blood, they shall return to Zion with singing and everlasting joy. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away when the fortunes of Zion are restored. Isaiah is not speaking of an earthly place, he is speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem, God's kingdom (cf. Rev. 21). We have been ransomed from sin and death by the sacrifice of the Pascal Lamb of God. He has given us peace in the midst of the sorrow and sighing of this world and has gone on ahead of us to prepare a place for us in the New Jerusalem (John 14:1-4). "Next year in Jerusalem" reflects our hope for more than physical restoration to Zion, God's symbol of His kingdom. It reveals in us our understanding that we are strangers and sojourners here in this world, even as Israel was in Egypt. We praise God for His benefits to us here, but even more do we praise him for the promise that we shall soon be freed to live forever with Him in His eternal city.



FOOTNOTES ON PASSOVER

1. Josephus: *War II.* xic.3; VI. ix.3; *Antiquities XVII.* ix.3; XX.v.3.

2. A schismatic Jewish group in Nablus, Israel, dates back to the 4th Century B.C. They still observe the sacrificial meal as a strict observance of the narrative outlined in Exodus 12.

3. Philip Goodman. *The Passover Anthology.* 1961. p. 70.

4. The "Mikveh" is a ritual cleansing practiced widely in pre-Christian Judaism. It is thought to be a pre-cursor of John's baptism.

5. Kabbalism is an ancient form of mystical Judaism. Another interpretation of the three matzot is that they stand for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Goodman p.439).

6. In section 7, the standard blessing of bread, such as would have been said on the Sabbath over two loaves is recited. This festival is special in that the third loaf is added to remind Israel of the bread of affliction. In section 8, a special blessing is given for the three loaves, stipulating that they are unleavened for Passover.

"On Sabbaths.. one is obligated to break bread and say the blessing over two whole loaves of bread, for it is written that..."on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread" (Ex. 16:22), referring to the double portion of manna that fell on Fridays when the Israelites were in the wilderness. On these two nights (Passover), a third loaf or cake of unleavened bread is added to fulfill the commandment of eating "the bread of affliction" (Deut. 16:3), for the Jewish sages did not want the two loaves used every Sabbath and festival to recall the bread of affliction." Goodman pp.438-9.

7. "Go forth and Learn," is the sum and substance of the reply to the Four Questions and the hymn "Dayaynoo," according to Goodman, p. 72.

8. *Philo, with an English Translation*, Loeb Classical Library, 1937. Vol. 7. pp. 269-271. "The Special Laws" *Book II*.

9. *Philo, Supplement II*, Loeb Classical Library, 1953. pp. 24-25. "Questions and Answers on Exodus."

10. "The practice of reclining while eating was a general one at the time that the Passover was instituted. Accordingly, in the series of questions to be asked at the Seder that is found in the Babylonian Mishnah, there is no reference to leaning. After the destruction of the Temple and when this custom was no longer in vogue, the Seder night was the only time during the year when Jews reclined while dining. Hence, the question relevant to this practice was included in the Four Questions." Goodman p. 440.

11. The tradition of the four questions were already codified in the Mishna by the Second Century A.D. Further midraschic interpretations were added during the period of the *Gaonim* (6th to 11th Century). The Four Sons is an example of the latter.

12. Pesahim 34b. *Pesahim* is a tractate of the Mishna, first codified in the Jerusalem Talmud, c. 200 a.d.

13. Pesahim 10:5.

14. National Jewish Welfare Board. *The Passover -Haggadah*, 1965. p.53.

15. *Philo, Supplement II*, Loeb Classical Library, 1953. pp. 24-25. "Questions and Answers on Exodus."

16. Up until the mid-19th Century, matzot were made by hand according to exacting prescribed standards. The fire used for baking the bread was started with the willows and lulav left over from Sukkoth. This custom has an interesting parallel in the Church, where palms from Palm Sunday are burned the following Ash Wednesday for the imposition of ashes. Matzot were made with perforations so that the dough would be prevented from rising, in case some leaven had gotten in inadvertently. In Talmud days, designs were made in the matzot with the perforation, but this was later outlawed as it tended to allow the bakers to "tarry" over the bread, thus disregarding the tradition that matzot were to be made in haste. Perforations were purely practical and not aesthetic. Later a perforating machine called a "*rede!*" was used and the familiar stripes of perforations in matzot resulted. With the machine age, matzot were made square rather than round for practicality. A great debate over machine-made matzot went on in the last century, but ultimately it was agreed that the consistency of content and practice afforded by machine-made matzot was actually preferable.

17. This statement was added in medieval days as the latest accretion in the Haggadah. Persecution of Jewish people was universal by these days, and it is understandable why prayer against the enemies of Judaism became popular in the Seder.






שבועות



Chapter 2. YOM HABIKKURIM and SHAVUOTH

irectly after Passover, Israel celebrated the Festival of First Fruits (*Habikkurim*) as long as the temple stood in Jerusalem. This festival initiated a series of harvest festivals which had spiritual overtones. After First Fruits came a period of seven weeks, or 49 days, and on the fiftieth day Shavuoth was celebrated. "Shavuoth" is Hebrew for "weeks," and is often called "The Feast of Weeks." The Greek term "Pentecost" (fiftieth day) was applied in Hellenistic Judaism. Other names given to this festival are "Feast of Reaping and Binding," "Feast of Harvest" and "Feast of Holy Convocation, or Assembly." The latter is a reference to the festival prescribed in Lev. 23:21.

Shavuoth was an observance of the first harvest which stood at the beginning of the summer on the 6th and 7th day of Sivan (May-June). Originally it was celebrated on one day in Palestine. However during the *diaspora*, a dispute arose as to whether it was to be celebrated on the sabbath, which would invariably be the 50th day after the Passover sabbath, or on the following day. Since both days were observed in various strains of Judaism, later rabbinic tradition has prescribed observing both days to avoid celebrating the feast on the wrong day. The traditional observance of Shavuoth includes a dinner and a night watch on Friday evening, a first fruits harvest dedication on the Saturday, and a joyful celebration in praise of God on Sunday.

Shavuoth was a pilgrimage festival in which Jews from some distance would travel to Jerusalem to offer the best part of their wheat harvest to the Lord in His temple. It began the summer growing season which was completed with the fruit harvest celebrated at the Feast of Sukkoth.

I. FIRST FRUITS

Leviticus 23:8 A holy convocation was to follow the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the Passover cycle. Most ancient Hebrew calendars indicate that this day fell on the seventh and final day of Unleavened Bread, and was said to be a new year. This was not to be confused with the fiscal new year (see Rosh Hashanah) but was the beginning of a Liturgical year. The Hebrew calendar to this day begins with the Yom Habikkurim (Day of First Fruits). After the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the observance of this festival fell into disuse until just recently in modern Israel.

Vv. 23:9-10 The piety of Israel was such that it took very seriously the fact that all things belonged to the Lord. Objects necessary to sustain of human life were seen as holy, and had to be redeemed in some way so they could be used by sinful mankind. The solution to this dilemma was to give a first part, a best part, to the Lord as an offering, with the conviction that the Lord would bless the rest for human use. Not only were grain and fruit to be dedicated in this way (as is the case in this festival), but firstlings (first-born animals) were offered to the Lord (Lev. 27:26, Ex. 13:2), and first-born sons were dedicated to God for His own purposes

and calling (Num. 3:13). This day marked the time when barley, the first grain of the previous winter's sowing to ripen, began to be harvested. A sheaf of barley was reverently cut from standing grain with a sickle, and the grain removed. This was carried in a bowl to the temple and given to the priest to offer to the Lord in thanksgiving.

Vv.11-14 The earliest observance follows the Biblical directive to bring the entire sheaf which the priest shall wave before the Lord. Wave offerings were also a part of the Shavuoth observance and will be discussed in Section V of this chapter. The sheaf was offered by the priest as a communal rite on behalf of all the people to initiate the harvest season. Part of it was placed before the Lord on the altar, and the rest was consumed by the priesthood. A burnt offering of a male lamb was also a part of the ritual to remind the people that atonement with God was necessary lest they harvest God's grain unworthily. Thus Israel paid tribute to God as the owner of the land and the source of its produce. Until this offering took place, it was unlawful either to begin reaping or to use any part of the new harvest as food (Mishna Menahoth 10:6-7).

2 Chronicles 31:1-4 In the days of Hezekiah, a revival of the faith of Israel took place at the Passover (Chapter 30). The response after Passover on the part of the good king and his people was to cleanse the land of idolatry and to give tithes in unprecedented amounts.

Vv. 5-9 Since the giving of tithes began directly after the Passover, we see that the law of the tithes is identified with First Fruits. The tithes were said to begin collecting in great heaps from the third month to the seventh month. This period corresponds to the time between Pentecost and Sukkoth which made up the entire harvest season. The giving of ten percent was seen as a figure given in tribute as early as Abram's encounter with Melchizadek (Gen. 14). By Jesus' time the tithe had become a legal tax assumed by all upstanding citizens of Judah. Jesus praises the widow who gave two small coins in contrast to those who gave generously out of their wealth, because she gave not ten percent but one hundred percent (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus was teaching not the letter of the law of the tithe, but the spirit of the law which recognized that all things belonged to God. The ten per cent as a token off the top of what one received was a reminder of that fact.

V. 10 The tithe, given as the first fruits and best fruits of the whole, dedicates the entire harvest to God, and ensures its being blessed by God in its use by His faithful people who have offered the tithe with thanksgiving. The experience of Azariah and the priesthood which received the willing tithes of Israel in Hezekiah's times, was that they received more than enough to meet their needs. Physical bounty in excess is a common Old Testament testimony to God's grace and blessing, and is reflected in Jesus' teaching: "Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap" (Luke 6:38). Jesus is talking about physical and spiritual blessings, and the terminology He uses refers back to the measure of the grain offerings.

Like the selection of the Passover Lamb, the first fruits are also to be the best. It would hardly be a sacrifice to give God flawed articles and leftovers. Indeed it is the leftovers which God multiplied to bless the people who faithfully offered God their best first. In the same way, when God commanded Jacob to return to his homeland, Jacob took the flawed sheep and goats in all humility from Laban's flock and God blessed him by building a strong flock out of those leftovers (Gen. 30:33ff)



The Talmud underscores the necessity of offering the first and best:

"When a man comes down to his field and sees a ripe fig, or a perfect cluster of grapes or a beautiful pomegranate, he ties each with a red thread, saying, 'these are *bikkurim*, the first fruits for the Festival.'"(1)

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 In these verses, Christ is proclaimed the first fruits of those who are raised from the dead. As such, God has given us a tithe of himself in Jesus as a down payment on our debts. As Jesus is God's firstborn and best offering for us, we who receive Him will receive with Him the blessings of an abundant and eternal life in God's kingdom. Paul, in writing these words, had to be aware that Jesus' resurrection took place on the Yom Habikkurim. As God's offering of first fruits, we can look forward to Jesus' fuller gifts as the harvest season progresses until we receive the Kingdom in all its fullness at the end of the age. Paul explains this by delineating a process whereby Jesus rises as first fruits, then the work of the church and the salvation of its members, and then the consummation of the Kingdom. This describes the process of the harvest of souls to take place between the time of Jesus' resurrection and the end of time. These times are foreshadowed by this harvest season beginning with the Festival of First Fruits, continuing through Pentecost and culminating in Sukkoth with all its end-time symbolism.

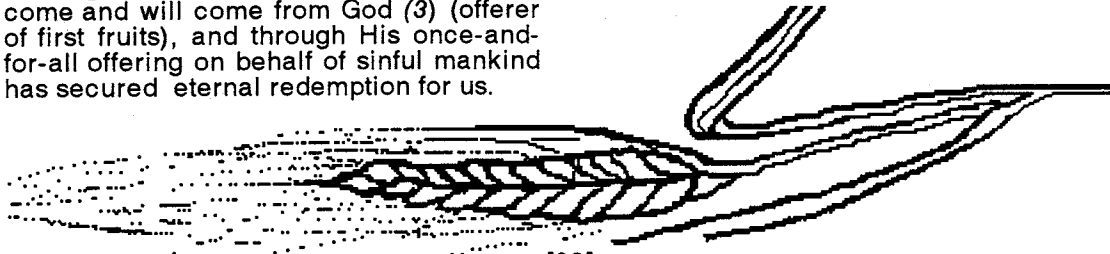
Hebrews 9:11-12 The priest was given the first fruits and tithes to bring before the Lord "as a communal rite on behalf of all the people before the harvest season began."(2) Philo states that the priest was making an offering of the first fruits as an *aparchei* (first fruits) on behalf of the nation and of all mankind (*De Septen.* 2:20). This is the same Greek word Paul applies to Christ in 1 Cor. 15:20. The vicarious nature of the sin offerings for atonement is also the nature of the first fruit offerings. Christ is both the Lamb and the *aparchei* of God. Thus, the writer to the Hebrews may point out that Christ is the High Priest of good things that have come and will come from God (3) (offerer of first fruits), and through His once-and-for-all offering on behalf of sinful mankind has secured eternal redemption for us.

II. COUNTING THE OMER

Leviticus 23:16a The Scripture commands that Israel count a seven week period after First Fruits and begin the wheat harvest with the festival of Shavuoth. Wheat was the last grain of the winter planting to ripen, and it began to be first harvested at this time. Sevenfold periods of time were always seen to be holy. The seventh day was sanctified at creation by the Lord of creation, the seventh month was the time of the solemn fall festival, the seventh year was a sabbatical year. So the week of weeks (49 days) was seen as a particularly holy time in which the people might prepare for the Pentecost, or Shavuoth festival.

The idea of a count-up of days (as the church celebrates in Advent and Lent) underscores the festival which stands at the end of that period of time. Traditionally, this time has been referred to as "*counting the omer*." The omer is a measure equal to a tenth of an ephah (the tithe may tie in here), which amounts to just over two quarts of dry measure. This is the prescribed measure of the sheaf offering. The count begins with the offering of an omer of barley and ends with the offering of an omer of wheat. Each day, psalms are read and preparatory prayers are said.(4) Qumran sectarians additionally celebrated a new wine and a new oil festival at fifty day intervals.(5)

Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4 In both these passages the resurrected Jesus instructs the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from the Holy Spirit. The event they were waiting for was Pentecost. For the same fifty days after Jesus rose on Yom Habikkurim, the disciples were counting a spiritual omer in anticipation of the fullness of the harvest. During that time, the disciples were obviously not idly waiting around, but were engaged in praying, meeting together and learning from the Lord, the First Fruits of the resurrection, who would gather a harvest of laborers at Pentecost and through them a spiritual harvest to the glory of God beyond the imagination of Hezekiah and Azariah.



III. THE NIGHT WATCH

Psalm 119:147-8 Although a night watch was not prescribed in the instructions concerning the Feast of Weeks in Leviticus 23, it became a tradition in the *diaspora* because of the pilgrimage nature of this festival. Exodus 23:16b states that all the males of Israel were to appear in the Temple before the Lord three times during the harvest season. Passover, Shavuoth and the fall festivals were those three times. People would come from all over the known world to offer their first wheat. Since the festival always fell on the Sabbath, they would have to arrive in Jerusalem on Friday, as travel on the Sabbath was illegal. The inns of Jerusalem were far to inadequate to handle this great throng, so the people camped in the hills surrounding the city that evening. It was an excellent time of year for camping. The climate was warm and temperate, the skies were clear, and the scorching summer wind (*hamsin*) had not yet arrived. The night watch was an exciting time of preparation for the festival, and most people remained awake all night in anticipation.

This was also a time for the family to get together, cease work for a while and go on what would today amount to a vacation.(6) The Psalmist reflects the purpose of a night watch in these verses: to pray and to meditate on the promises contained in God's word. One example of a night watch were those usually observed by the high priest on the eve of Yom Kippur to prepare himself for the awesome task of entering the Holy of Holies. Reading of God's Word, and additionally in latter observances passages from the Talmud, also helped prepare the celebrants to find deeper meaning in the observance they were about to experience. "The first night of the festival is spent in reading an anthology of sacred texts, known as *Tikkun Lel Shavuoth*."(7)

Luke 6:1-26 Jesus prayed all night long (v.12-13) in anticipation of the choosing of His twelve apostles, indicating the necessity of earnest sacrificial prayer in preparation for an important event in the plan of God. It is interesting that the prior context for this night watch of Jesus is the complaint of the Pharisees that some of Jesus' followers were plucking grain on the Sabbath (vv. 1-5). That grain image, so common to Shavuoth, is accompanied by the pilgrimage theme of Shavuoth just after this night watch where people from all over Palestine gathered around Jesus

to hear him and receive healing (vv.17-19). Could it be that Jesus is fulfilling the intention of this harvest festival in feeding the people of God spiritually?

To this end, Jesus is willing to reinterpret the sabbath laws out of compassion for the sick and needy (vv. 6-11). The beatitudes and sayings of woe follow (vv. 20-26) where Jesus contrasts being well-fed with spiritual hunger and replaces the emphasis of thanksgiving for physical blessings with spiritual comfort, where rewards for the poor and humble are stored up in heaven. Part of the celebration includes sharing God's bounty with the unfortunate. Moreover the temptation to celebrate with extravagance was tempered with some frugality in deference to others less fortunate. The Talmud records the great Rabbi Maimonides, in medieval times, concerning this festival:

"Women should have pretty clothes and trinkets bought for them, according to a man's financial means... and while one eats and drinks, it is his duty to feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow, and other poor and unfortunate people; for he who eats and drinks with his wife and family, without giving anything to eat and drink to the poor and the distressed-- his meal is not a rejoicing divinely commanded, but a rejoicing of his stomach, a disgrace to those who indulge in it."

(Yad, Yom Tov 6:18)

Matthew 26:40-41 Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was also a type of night watch in which He prepared for the hour of His glory on the cross the next day through prayer. At the same time He urged His disciples to "Watch and pray."

Acts 2:5 A fuller consideration of the importance of the Pentecost chapter in the Book of Acts is contained in section VI. Here, we need only point out that Pentecost was not the result of the Holy Spirit falling on the Apostles, but was the pre-existing context of that event. The Jews from all over the known world were in Jerusalem because they had made the Shavuoth pilgrimage as had their ancestors for generations. God used this splendid opportunity when Jews from many nations were gathered to watch and pray, to bring them the news that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promised Messiah.



IV. THE FIFTIETH DAY

Exodus 34:21-24 As the Lord gives commands concerning the sabbath, He immediately includes a command to observe the Festival of Weeks. This festival, which ends a period of seven times seven days, is hallowed as a kind of "super sabbath," a sabbath more holy than the rest. The Scripture also states that this day falls at the beginning of the wheat harvest, when the latest grain crop begins to be gathered. It stands at the head of the long hot summer when much labor of tilling and ingathering will continue until completion of the fruit harvest ends the growing season at Sukkoth. This fifty day period between the barley and wheat harvests is as a whole a first-fruit dedication of the harvest to God, so all the work and all the bounty will be blessed by God for Israel's use. Consistent with the theology of the other festivals, Shavuoth fits into a spiritual theme that traces salvation history from deliverance to the promised land.

If Passover recalls deliverance from Egypt, and Sukkoth anticipates crossing the Jordan to live in peace with God, then Shavuoth is an initiation into the wilderness wanderings. We will see in section VII that the rabbinic understanding of this festival centers around the Sinai experience in the wilderness. The Church Year is the fulfillment of this liturgical year of Israel. The crucifixion is connected with the deliverance of Passover. The resurrection celebrates the first fruits of eternal life for God's people. Pentecost is the first harvest of believers who will work diligently by the power of God's Spirit through the wilderness and long hot summer of this life until the harvest of souls is complete at the end time (Sukkoth) and God gathers all His faithful into his heavenly garner.

Deuteronomy 26:1-13 Around the same time as the wheat harvest, the fruit trees would begin to ripen, and the most perfect of these would be selected with red ribbons to be offered as first fruits as stated above. Again the command to make a pilgrimage to the temple is given; the fruit was to be taken in a basket. In the *diaspora*, dried fruits were offered by those who lived at a distance, while fresh fruit was brought by those nearer by. Fruit offerings included fruits, olives, dates and raisins. As with the wheat harvest, the work continued as the fruit ripened throughout the summer and concluded with the fall festival of Sukkoth.

As Israel is about to enter the promised land, Moses gives them instructions in the observance of this festival. He calls upon them to make a recitation before the priest which reflects God's choice of the patriarchs, the Passover and the miraculous events of the wilderness. Traditionally the ceremonies include an "altar dance" such as is reflected in Psalm 118 at the Sukkoth festival. In this dance all the males in attendance were to participate by singing the Hallel Psalms (Ps. 113-118). Psalm 114 especially remembers the works of God among the Israelites in the Exodus. We see that the offering of first fruits presented to the priest as a tithe, was to be shared with the priests and the poor, the widow and the fatherless. The feast concluded with communal meals to which the poor, the stranger and the Levite were invited, much like the *agape* meals of the Christian era included the elements of fellowship and charity.

Numbers 28:26-31 Burnt offerings were also a part of the festival to cleanse the people and make them worthy to offer their first fruits before the Lord. Yet each burnt offering was accompanied by a proportional cereal offering, reinforcing the theme of thanksgiving and blessing of the crops. V. 31 indicates that this festival had ongoing ramifications throughout the summer, with many individuals offering personal sacrifices.

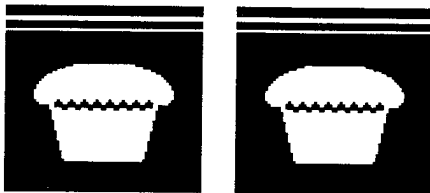
"After the sacrificial presentation of the loaves it was possible for individuals to make offerings of the new grain crop as personal sacrifices of the first fruits. The season for this apparently came to a close at the Feast of Booths. It seems that the private offerings could be made at any time during this season, not only at the high feasts. These offerings were ceremonially presented by the worshipper to the priest, accompanied by the moving confessional recital of Israel's deliverance from slavery and its inheritance of Canaan as the Land of Promise. (Deut. 26:1:11)."(8)

Jeremiah 5:20-26 In the arid land of Canaan, the agricultural concern for sufficient rain throughout the summer is certainly a central part of this festival, even as Sukkoth includes prayers for winter rains as integral. Jeremiah prophecies against a senseless people who have lost their fear of God (v. 21-22). The people have lost their zeal to remember their gracious God who gives them the precious rain they need (v.24), and so the bounty they have come to take for granted has been revoked by God (v. 25).

As the Holy Spirit is poured out like refreshing rain to revive and sustain us in our Pentecost labors, we need also take heed lest we forget that every ability we have and every breath we take is given to us by God's grace. Our labors in God's harvest must be accompanied by frequent sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving that the good fruit will continue to be harvested for the greater joy of the end-time feast of Christ the bridegroom. As we pray for spiritual blessings to multiply after the good beginning of first fruits, so we may also pray for temporal conditions to favor this growing season of God's kingdom. For the believer in Jesus, the Shavuoth promise is that He who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

An important part of this festival in modern Judaism are the prayers for the government and the prayers for the State of Israel.⁽⁹⁾ Believers in Jesus living in nations that give them the freedom to worship their God should never forget to thank God for this precious freedom. They should support their governments with their prayers, even as they remember those in other nations who are neither so free nor so blessed.

V. 26 The wicked people who appear among Israel to entrap them are also a result of God's withholding Shavuoth promises from a forgetful and rebellious people. Part of the promise of this festival was that enemy nations would be driven from the land, and jealous men would not desire the land (Ex. 34:24). Those who leave their land at the beginning of the harvest to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem would not have to fear that their lands would be plundered in their absence by wicked men. The evil one still prowls around like a hungry lion, yet those who commit their cause to the Lord and worship Him need not fear. The Lord protects His beloved who seek His kingdom as a priority, and will add to them everything else they need.



V. THE WAVE LOAVES

Leviticus 23:17 The two wave loaves were made of a tenth of an omer (a tenth of an ephah) of the best flour milled from the first sheaf of wheat, just as the omer of barley was offered at the Yom Habikkurim. The loaves were to be leavened, unlike the Passover bread. Passover anticipated the Messiah, who was to be a sinless offering. These loaves represent the best offerings of the people of God who are yet tainted with sin (the symbolism of leaven). Because of the leaven, this bread was not worthy to be offered upon the altar, yet God did command it and received it in another way: it was waved before the Lord. The purposes and methodology surrounding the wave offering are unclear. Perhaps as an offering to be used for wholesome purposes either by the priesthood or the individual, it was waved toward the altar for consecration, as money offerings might be presented before the church altar today before it is used for the mission and ministry of the church.

Wave offerings were parts of more important offerings as far as the meager evidence indicates. This would certainly make sense in the first fruits festivals, as the wave offering is a representative of an entire crop. In the same way we offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1), because we are all a part of the significant whole offering of Christ on the cross. The wave offering was offered by a worshiper in connection with the priest. Some believe that the priest laid his hands on the offerer who bore the wave offering in his hands, and moved the offerer in a waving fashion, similar to the Jewish worship practice of *davening*. (cf. Num. 6:19-20).

Some scholars believe that the wave offering was a rite of elevation of the offering before the altar. This was common in most near eastern worship practices whatever the methodology of practice. There is also good reason to believe that offerings which deviate from the prescribed norms (e.g. leavened bread) must gain special acceptance. Perhaps the wave offering was such a mode of acceptance. Stipulated wave offerings include the grain offering of a suspected adulteress (Num 5:25) because she may be unacceptable to provide such an offering, the barley sheaf (Lev. 23: 11-14) because it was not wheat, and the wave loaves (vv. 11, 20) because they contained leaven.⁽¹⁰⁾

God's grace is such that He found a way to consecrate sinful humans. The perfect body of the Messiah was offered upon the altar (as were spotless lambs after the wave offering) on our behalf. As the priests participated in their sacrifices by eating a part of it, so we participate in the body of Christ by eating the unleavened bread of sacrifice. Because of the sacrifice of our High Priest, He can present us (perhaps wave us or lift us up) before the altar of His Father and sanctify us by His Spirit to be blessed for His service. Jesus as High Priest is indeed a Redeemer not only of our lives, but also of our imperfect offerings and sacrifices that they may be used for God's holy purposes. How appropriate of the Spirit to first begin the work of sanctification at Pentecost!



VI. THE STORY OF RUTH

Ruth 1:15-17 Traditionally, the central reading on the second day of Shavuoth, after the Hallel psalms is the entire book of Ruth. The rural harvest in Bethlehem that makes up the context of this book lends itself well to this harvest festival. During the festival, plants and flowers decorate the *bimah* (altar) and the holy ark. These are reminiscent of the country-side around Bethlehem, as well as the slopes of Sinai where the law was received. It is all the more significant that Jesus, descendant of Ruth, was born in Bethlehem, which means "house of bread."

In the story of Ruth are the important elements of this festival: gleaning a harvest, dedication to the true God, blessing in humility, honesty and hard work, future blessings from meager beginnings. "In Ruth we have a gracious story of love, faithfulness, and friendship stronger than death..."(11) But most important, Ruth is a Gentile proselyte who responded to the God of Israel because of the faith that she saw in her Jewish husband and mother-in-law. "Your people will be my people," she said, and so was grafted into the nation of Israel by faith and became a forebearer of the Messiah.

Ephesians 2:11-22 That Jesus was born in Bethlehem from a line that included Ruth, a Gentile, shows Him to be the author of a spiritual commonwealth which grants peace with the one true God for

Jew and Gentile alike. Those who were once far off are now brought near the altar of God and waved there in a surprising turn of events to be made acceptable. Jesus came and preached peace to those who were far off and those who were near (v.17-18), so that they both might have access to the Father. As Ruth and as the strangers and sojourners at many a harvest festival were made a part of Israel through the communal meals, so all who are alienated from God by sin are welcomed into the household of God by the Lord of the harvest.

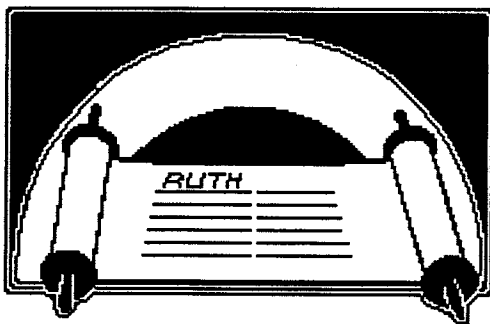
As the wall of hostility between God and man is broken down, so with it crumbles the wall between Jew and Gentile as together they reenact the story of Ruth. It seems more than coincidental that a passage which contains these Shavuoth themes of those near and far being brought together into the family of God should conclude (v. 22) by declaring that we are built together into a holy temple for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. The same Spirit of God that blessed Israel's labors in the harvest was poured out on Pentecost to motivate the Church to bring the Gospel of Jesus to all nations. We who live in that long Pentecost season continue to work under the Spirit's guidance and power to reap a large harvest before the end of the season.

Galatians 5:22-25 The Spirit of God not only produces new souls as a fruit for God's kingdom, but as God's faithful are sanctified, the Holy Spirit also produces in them fruit, such as outlined in these verses, and gifts of ministry so that the work of the harvesters might be effective.

Acts 2:6-13 Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection, rising on the day of First Fruits, the day after the Passover sabbath. During the time of counting the omer, the disciples waited in Jerusalem for the Lord to make the next move. Now at Pentecost, Jesus pours our His Spirit as He had promised to initiate the first fruits of the ministry of the gospel. The Church was born that day, and became the family of God gathered in Jerusalem which would go to the ends of the earth with the message of new life and life eternal through the Messiah Jesus. As stated above, it was an opportune time for this to happen, as Jews from all over the known world had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival. A list of some of the regions is included in vv. 9-11. As they came for the feast, the only thing they had in common was their Jewishness.

The *diaspora* had separated Jews so completely and for such a long time that they had absorbed the languages and cultural patterns of the various localities in which they lived. It was the ultimate curse of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) where God interrupted the prideful plans of mankind by confusing their language. Now, with most of Israel lost, even the remnant of Judah was divided by space and language. In spite of this, the Holy Spirit moved the apostles to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, and they found themselves speaking to each language group in words they could understand. The result was that three thousand understood and believed. The miracle of Shavuoth that day was that in Jesus all the divided people of God began to be gathered and offered to God through the new covenant in Messiah's blood.

Vv. 14-42 As great a miracle as took place at Pentecost, it was only the beginning. Shavuoth was the beginning of the harvest when people prayed for God to send bounty in the season to come. So also the outpouring of the Spirit and the conversion of many in Jerusalem was the guarantee of better things to come. Each Jew who came to faith would go back to his home in various corners of the world and share their faith that Jesus is the Messiah. And not Jews alone: Peter preaches a message drawn from the prophet Joel in which he underscores God's intention to pour out His Spirit upon *all flesh* (v. 17). This was in accord with Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8 that His witnesses would go forth from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth.



Though it was not until Peter's experience with Cornelius that he realized the promise included Gentiles as well, he already was moved to proclaim to those present at Pentecost that the promise is for them and their children, as well as to those who are far off (v. 39). This is the same terminology we have just seen in Ephesians to describe the reconciliation of Jews and

Gentiles, sons and strangers; that together they might become the family of God. The remembrance of Ruth being joined to Israel through love and charity has seen its fulfillment on a world-wide scale this miraculous Pentecost. So the apostles received the Spirit and became a first fruits offering of much more to come.

Romans 11:11-16 From Paul we get the impression that the Jewish nation also became a first fruits offering for the salvation of the Gentiles. As Jesus' death was temporary, so Paul sees the unbelief of the Jews to be a heart-breaking, but temporary sacrifice through which the Spirit of God was able to work faith in many Gentiles. As Jesus rose as a down payment on the resurrection of all who believe, so the Jews will return to that faith by the end time harvest (*cf.* vv.25-26). Jesus' death meant reconciliation of the world to God, and His resurrection meant new and eternal life for all who believed. So the unbelief of the Jews is a later typology of Jesus' godforsakenness on the cross: through it God could bring reconciliation with the Gentiles.

Likewise, the resurrection of Jesus becomes significant in this case as a promise of the return of the Jews to righteousness based on grace in Messiah Jesus-- and that, says Paul, means nothing less than life from the dead (v. 15). Then Paul brings in the images of first fruits and the law of the tithe: if the dough offered at first fruits is made holy, then the whole lump is made holy (v. 16). Through the holiness of Jesus, the perfect offering of God, the apostles were sanctified at Pentecost, and through them some of the Jews were sanctified (v. 5); and through them the election of God was extended to all the world, both Gentiles and Jews. Because most of the Jews did not receive God's grace in Jesus does not mean they lost the promise of God who sanctifies the lump along with the tithe of dough. Indeed the large numbers of first fruits of those in Judah who are returning to Jesus as Messiah in our age are a wonderful testimony of greater things to come.

Romans 12:1 Since the Lamb was slain once and for all for the sin of the world, it is then for us to present ourselves as *living* sacrifices before the Lord. As the priest may have waved the offerers before the altar to make their lives and offerings worthy of God's blessing, so our offering is a living presentation of ourselves in Christ to the Father who declares the guilty to be innocent and cleanses the unclean.

VII. THE GIVING OF THE LAW

Exodus 19-20 The ancient rabbis estimate that it took seven weeks for Israel to travel from Egypt to Sinai. If this was the case, then the Law was given to Moses at the time of Shavuoth. Because of this, the giving of the Law became a secondary feature of the Pentecost festival. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. when the harvest pilgrimage became impossible, the giving of the Law became the central theme of the festival, and continues to be in rabbinic Judaism today. Rabbi El'azar ben Pedath (c. 270 A.D.) declares in the Talmud (Pesahim 68b) "Pentecost is the day on which Torah was given."⁽¹²⁾

In the second century, the Zohar interprets the fifty days of the harvest season as the "courting days of the bridegroom Israel with the bride Torah" (Yitro 78b). This is an interesting coincidence with Ephesians 5:21-33, where the Church is the bride and Messiah is the groom.⁽¹³⁾ The reading of the 19th and 20th chapters of Exodus became a regular part of the Shavuoth observance around 200 A.D. By contrast, the reading of the Book of Ruth predates this by many generations. In the modern celebration, these chapters, especially the Ten Commandments, are to be read on the first day, along with Num. 28:26-31 and Ezekiel 1. On the second day, Deut. 14:22-16:1 and Hab. 2:20-23 are read in addition to the entire Book of Ruth.

"In the observances of Shavuoth, the historical as well as the agricultural aspects are reflected. The Ten Commandments are read in the synagogue on the first day. They are preceded by the recital of the Aramaic poem *Akdamuth*,⁽¹⁴⁾ composed by Rabbi Meir ben Isaac of France who lived in the Eleventh Century."⁽¹⁵⁾

Some have suggested that the two wave loaves were representative of the two tablets of the law which Moses received. Because the giving of Torah was the first step toward knowing the Lord and living in relationship with his will, Shavuoth is often called "The Birthday of Judaism." For those who celebrate the fulfillment of the law in Jesus, Pentecost becomes the "Birthday of the Church." When we consider that the strength of the old covenant is in the law (1 Cor. 15:56-7), we can see a connection to the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost under the new covenant, where faith and strength come from the Holy Spirit of Jesus.

The Book of Jubilees, an intertestamental writing, treats the feast of Shavuoth as not only a harvest festival, but as a covenant renewal ceremony for the covenant of Noah (22:1). The Noaic covenant is said to be found on this day (6:1-21). Perhaps this kind of thinking gave rise to the connection between Pentecost and the Sinaitic covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 The renewal of the covenant was foreseen by Jeremiah as one in which the letter of the law would be replaced by a personal knowledge of the Lord. Like the themes of the harvest festival, it recalls the wonderful working of the Lord to bring freedom to His people in the times of the Exodus, and remembers the importance of God's revelation through the Law. Yet the Red Sea and Sinai were only first fruits, tied with the red ribbon of perfection as types of better things to come. The empty tomb speaks to us of a victory which is seen in the hearts and lives of Jesus' people; the Holy Spirit moves us beyond obedience to share the testimony as a labor of love.



Pentecost became in a very real sense a covenant renewal experience in which those moved by faith no longer needed to be taught to know the Lord because the laws would be written on their hearts. The barrier had been broken down; access to God was possible through the atoning sacrifice of Messiah Jesus. Now we can "know the Lord" in a personal way since He has poured out His Spirit upon us and dwells with His Spirit within us. He is our God, and we are His people, reclaimed by the power of Jesus' blood and renewed by the power of Jesus' Spirit. Each new day that we walk by God's Spirit in the

newness of life is great joy for us, and becomes all the more wonderful when we remember that our sanctification is the first fruit of greater things to come.



Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:23-29 RSV).

FOOTNOTES ON SHAVUOTH

1. Martha Zimmerman. *Celebrate the Feasts*. Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis MN. 1981. p. 107.
2. J. C. Rylaarsdam. "Weeks, Feast Of," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Abingdon, Nashville TN. 1962. Volume 4, p. 828.
3. The ancient Greek texts are pretty evenly divided between reading this verse "good things that have come" and "good things to come." One would underscore Jesus' fulfillment of God's grace in the past, while the other would anticipate a future harvest of better things through Jesus. Both readings are consistent with the celebration of Shavuoth in which thanksgiving for past and prayer for future issue from the manifestation of the down payment of the first fruits of harvest. In this connection it is also interesting to note that the Greek word for first fruits in 1 Cor. 15:20 and Philo (*aparchei*), is quite similar to the word used here for high priest (*archeireus*).
4. A suggested table of psalm readings for each of the fifty days is included in Zimmerman, *Celebrate the Feasts*, pp. 100-102.
5. The Qumran community observed each festival on a Sunday: First the barley loaves on month 1, day 26; next the wheat harvest on month 3, day 15, then a new wine festival on month 5, day 3, and finally a new oil festival on month 6, day 22. (Temple Scroll).
6. Zimmerman suggests a schedule of family devotions and recreation to assist believers in Jesus in celebrating this Friday evening to Saturday morning Night Watch, *Celebrate the Feasts*, pp. 112-118. On pp. 123-124 she outlines a suggested celebration of the entire two-day festival. This is included in the Worship section of this book.
7. Philip Birnbaum. *Prayer Book for Shavuoth*. Hebrew Publishing Co., New York, NY. 1979. p. xvii.
8. Rylaarsdam. *IDB*. Volume 4, p. 828.
9. Birnbaum. pp. 215, 217.
10. J. Milgrom. "Wave Offering". *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Abingdon, Nashville TN. 1976. Supplementary Volume. p. 945.
11. Victor Buksbazen. *The Gospel In The Feasts of Israel*. Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington PA. 1954. p. 19.
12. *Pesahim* is a tractate of the Mishna, first codified in the Jerusalem Talmud, c. 200 A.D.
13. The Zohar is the fundamental book of the *Kabbalah*, a mystical strain of Judaism. The book is attributed to the Second Century Rabbi, Simeon ben Yohai.
14. The text of the *Akdamuth* is included in the worship section of this book.
15. Birnbaum. p. xvii.



רוש השנה



Chapter 3. ROSH HASHANAH



Rosh Hashanah literally means "Head of the Year," and denotes a New Year's celebration in the Jewish liturgical calendar falling on the first day of the autumnal month of Tishri. This becomes somewhat confusing, since Tishri is the seventh month of the calendar, while the first day of the first month of Nisan (a spring month more anciently called Abib) is often more logically cited as the beginning of the new year. The roots of the problem go back as least to the time of the divided monarchy where coronations and anniversaries thereof were made to coincide with the new year. The regnal new year in the northern kingdom of Israel was observed on the first of Nisan, while for the major part of the southern kingdom of Judah's history, their regnal new year began with Tishri.

The reason for the importance of the seventh month stems from the idea of the sabbatical month. As God rested on the seventh day from the work of creation, thus instituting a weekly sabbath, so the seventh month and the seventh year have a special holy significance. This was evidently behind the Lord's proclamation that the holy festivals of the fall cycle be fixed in relation to the beginning of the seventh or sabbatical month (*viz.* Tishri 1) [Lev. 23:23-25.] Since Yom Kippur and Sukkoth (falling on Tishri 10 and 15, respectively) are eschatological festivals, they not only look back on the old year, but take on a hopeful significance in a new start for another era, be that a new agricultural season or anew life with God.

The ancient Rabbis, perhaps as early as the eleventh century B.C., observing the importance of the sabbatical month, felt that it was likely that the Lord did His work of creation in the seventh month. Since they number each year back to an estimated origin at creation more than five millenia in the past, it became tradition to assign the first day of the year to the month in which creation was thought to take place, *viz.* Tishri 1.

The day of solemn rest celebrated with the blowing of trumpets on the first day of

the seventh month commanded by God in Lev. 23:23-25 and Num. 29:1-6 does not reflect the celebration of the new year. In fact, the only Biblical usage of the term "Rosh Hashanah" is in Ez. 40:1, where it probably designates not a new year's day, but the season of the year. The identification of new year's with the Feast of Trumpets was then rabbinic in origin, and postdated the writing of the Pentateuch. Its importance as a day of gathering, whether as a new year or not, can still be seen in post-exilic times, as the returning Jews gathered for the reading of the Law on Tishri 1 (Neh. 8:2.)

So it appears that at least from the time of the monarchy, two new year observances existed in Israel. The first beginning the liturgical year in the spring, and the second becoming a civil new year, coinciding with the Feast of Trumpets in the Fall. Though the Jewish calendar for a given year proceeds from Tishri 1 to Tishri 1, Tishri is called "the seventh month." While considering the Jewish calendar, it might be helpful to also note that the Jewish 12-month calendar is based on lunar months of 28 or 29 days. To align the seasons properly, a thirteenth month is added every three years or so after the month of Adar. Hence the Jewish leap year adds an en-

tire month. New moon festivals at the beginning of each month were always observed in Israel, and for that reason the lunar calendar has become a part of Jewish tradition. It is the variation between the lunar calendar and the conventional solar calendar which accounts for the fact that the Jewish Holy Days never seem to fall on the same days from one year to the next.

The fall festival we consider here is proclaimed in the Pentateuch as a time to blow the shofar (a trumpet-like instrument made from a ram's horn Num. 29:1.) Rav. Saadiah Gaon⁽¹⁾ delineated ten reasons why the shofar is to be sounded on Rosh Hashanah. These ten reasons have become a central part of the tradition of this festival, and become for us a helpful outline of the various aspects of Rosh Hashanah, and will be used as such in the body of the Bible study to follow.

As we study this festival, we should remember that there are three emphases in the Rosh Hashanah celebration. The first praises the Lord God as King, the second looks back to remember the many mighty and merciful acts of God, and the third looks ahead in anticipation of divine revelation.

I. OUR FATHER, OUR KING

Psalm 47 This psalm is central to the Rosh Hashanah celebration. It is repeated seven times just before the blowing of the shofar. Since God's name, *Elohim*, is used seven times in the psalm, the name is uttered a total of forty-nine times. The rabbis teach that there are forty-nine levels of spiritual purity, ranging from the totally impure to the pure. Realizing that there is little that man can do to attain absolute purity, there are also forty-nine levels of sanctity which man can obtain. The forty-nine-fold use of *Elohim* is then to encourage God's people to increase in their intellectual knowledge and deeds of charity, as they are to remember that God in His mercy will overcome the many aspects of impurity in our lives.⁽²⁾

The "levels of sanctity" need to be understood in sharp contrast to the sanctification of the Christian through the Messiah, Jesus. Because of His substitutionary death for all people, God declares us righteous or just. We are completely holy or sanctified because the righteous life of Christ is accounted to us (Rom. 3:23-24). As we live out our lives on this earth

struggling with the old nature that still clings to us, we grow in our sanctification, empowered by the Spirit within us.

V. 1 Clapping hands and shouting songs of joy is seen by the rabbis as the response of common people. The Maskil in v. 7 is interpreted as one who is skillful in the art of singing praises to God.⁽³⁾ So the elements of popular worship, of clapping and shouting, are blended with the more refined aspects of liturgical worship in this psalm to worship the Lord as King of all.

Vv. 2-3 The universal kingship of the Lord is praised. While tender mercy and loving kindness are also attributes of the Lord, here it is His power and majesty which strike awe and holy fear into the peoples of the earth. Rosh Hashanah begins a time of repentance, and as impure people come before the Lord of Righteousness, humility and fear are understandable themes. The predominant appellation of God in this psalm is *Elohim*--God. The personal name of God, more reflective of His mercy is used only twice, and one of those instances states that *Yahweh* is "Most High and Terrible." He is not only the God of Israel, but all peoples are put into subjection under His feet. The Festival of Booths (Sukkoth) which closes the fall festival cycle emphasizes the universal kingship of God. Zech. 14:16 prophecies a gathering of all nations at the final Festival of Booths. This is anticipated already at this prior festival which calls all Israel to a solemn gathering before the Lord as King.

Vv. 5-8 God ascends the throne amid trumpet blasts and shouts of praise. This was typical of the enthronement ceremonies of kings in Israel (see Sukkoth, section IV). These verses are used in connection with our Lord's ascension. Verse 5 is the first verse of the Introit for Ascension (*Lutheran Worship*, p. 55).

V. 9 The gathering of the assembly stipulated in Leviticus 23 is stated here. Along with the *shofarim* in v. 5, this is certainly the reason this psalm is so important to the Rosh Hashanah celebration. Perhaps David himself, remembering his own coronation at the new year, was thinking of Rosh Hashanah as he wrote this song of praise to the Lord, his King.

Psalm 98:6 Here is another passage proclaiming the Lord as King with trumpets. The first reason for blowing the shofar at Rosh Hashanah is to proclaim the

Lord as King, and this verse is always quoted as part of the reason. The Lord is worthy to be King because He is the Creator of the universe. Rosh Hashanah became the new year because the Lord was said to create the universe in the seventh month. It is then the birthday of creation in which the sovereignty of the Creator is proclaimed.

When Christianity speaks of the Lord as King, it understands it in the Trinitarian sense as Luther did when he wrote his explanations of the Apostles' Creed, especially the second article. God's claim on believers is not merely a function of creation but of the new creation in Jesus. The whole creation "still groans under travail," said Paul (Rom. 8:22). The new creation *has come* in Jesus, *is present* in Word and Sacrament, and *will arrive* at the end of time when we all experience the new heaven and the new earth.

Leviticus 25:39-43 Because the people of Israel are servants (even slaves, v. 42) of the Most High King, they may not be enslaved by men. Because of this, His law is binding, and our obedience imperative. On the other hand, God calls His people His children (*cf.* Deut. 14:1), and children may beseech their parent for pardon and help. These antithetical truths lie at the heart of the understanding of the Law and the Gospel. To call on God as Father and King is the basis of the *Avinu Malkenu* (Our Father, Our King.) This moving prayer is attributed to Rabbi Akiva (*Talmud Taanis* 25b) and was effective in drawing the Lord's attention to answering a prayer for rain, after many other more formal prayers and much fasting had failed.(4) What the ancient rabbis could only appeal to as two opposing sides of God, are harmonized in the Messiah Jesus who satisfied the law and reconciled us with the Father.



"Sounding the Shofar"

II. THE AWESOME DAYS

Ezekiel 18:30-32 The King is Judge, and in His righteousness must judge His people, every one according to his ways. The way to avert judgment is repentance: *Shuvoo!*--"Turn!" This is the call of all Scripture, for one cannot receive the message of salvation and life in the new creation unless he is completely turned around. Not only must man turn from his sins, but have his mind changed (*metanoia*) and renewed (Romans 12:2). He must return to the beginning and be born anew (John 3:5) before the transcendent ways of God can even begin to be comprehended.

Rosh Hashanah has its greatest significance as a prelude to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The ten days between the two observances are "Awesome Days" (*yomim noraim*), or days of turning (*teshuvah*), in which repentance must take place. For those who trust Jesus, repentance is essential for receiving the message, and for sanctification. For those who yet wait for Messiah, repentance is the only hope for justification. Thus these days of repentance are awesome indeed.

The Talmud states (*Mesechet Rosh Hashana* 16b) that three heavenly books are opened on Rosh Hashanah, to be closed on Yom Kippur. One is for recording those who are absolutely wicked; so bad as to be hopeless. Another is to record the names of those who are absolutely righteous; they are inscribed for life with God. This book must be short indeed, as David himself wrote "there is none that does good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:3).

The third book records the names of the *bainonim*--those who are neither righteous nor wicked. Judgment is suspended for these people for the ten day period following Rosh Hashanah, after which time they are inscribed in one of the other two books in accordance to the quality of their penitence. "If they have increased in their merit, they are inscribed for life, if not they are inscribed for death..." States the Talmud. Recognizing the inadequacy of ascending in merit, the Rambam in his *Laws of Repentance* (3:3) quotes this phrase of the Talmud, altering it to read "if they *repent*, they are inscribed for life."(5) The Rambam held that no merit of any type would tip the scale in favor of the *bainonim*, rather that true repentance would be considered as absolute righteousness by the Lord of mercy.

The Talmud had given rise to the rabbinic terms "majority of merit" and "majority of sin," which came dangerously close to adding up lists of sins and deeds of charity and judging the *bainonim* by the numerical difference. Remembering that the same Psalmist who said "no one is righteous" also cried out "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3), such a conclusion from the Talmud as stated above might well set the Rambam ill at ease. Believers in Jesus recognize that it is not deeds, or even repentance, but faith which is considered as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Repentance is seen as a function of that relationship with God, more than the simple attempt to turn from doing wrong. The closing of the awesome days with the sacrifices of Yom Kippur recognizes that for all the repentance and prayer and fasting, it is in the final event God's mercy that gives life.

While it is God who is said in rabbinic teaching to keep the three books, it is Satan who stands as an accuser, bringing up all our sins before the attention of the Lord on New Year's Day. The Rabbis also taught that Satan hates the sound of the shofar and is confused by it.(6) Therefore, the trumpet hampers the evil one in his work as prosecutor. Since the last trumpet will spell the end of Satan's influence over the sons of men, he is quite understandably upset by it whenever it is sounded.

Ezekiel 18:31-32 says that we must have a new heart and a new spirit to repent. God desires the death of no one, and so the assurance of His mercy is already there. Wrath is stored up in a heart that is hard and impenitent (Rom. 2:5), but forgiveness is available through God's love.

1 Corinthians 13:6 God's love is such that it does not keep records of wrongs, lest none should stand. In Jesus, the love of God is revealed in forgiveness. God's only book is the book of life in which He desires to inscribe all people who turn to Him.



TASHLICH

Micah 7:18-20 *Tashlich* is a tradition derived from the word "casting," used in v.19: "You will cast all our sins into the

depths of the sea." As the Days of Turning begin, it has become a custom for Jews on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah to go out to a body of water and gather on the banks. A prayer is read which begins with this passage from Micah and concludes with Psalm 118:5-9. The latter is a key passage recited on Sukkoth, so that being set free from our sins which will be celebrated during that festival following the Day of Atonement, is already anticipated here.

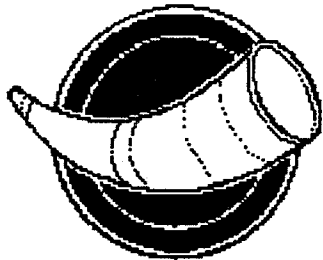
At the body of water, the people empty their pockets into the water to symbolize the throwing off of the sin which they have been carrying around with them. Usually stones are gathered in the people's pockets to be thrown into the water, as they will sink, and the sin they represent will not be retrievable. Some will throw bread crumbs, perhaps because of the symbol of leaven, or as a token of our lives, which having been given up will return in spiritual blessing (*cf.* Eccl. 11:1). The empty pockets and hems of garments are shook out over the water, because sins have a way of clinging in the dark corners of our lives.(7)

Jonah was cast into the sea when his sin was identified as the source of the troubles of his shipmates. He was taken away from them when the large fish swallowed him. Whatever body of water is involved, the tradition insists that there be fish in it. Some say this is because the ever-open eye of the fish is like the eye of God who sees all our sin, yet carries it away as the fish may consume the bread crumbs and take them away. Others think that man is like the fish: fish are easily ensnared, as we are by our sins (Ecclesiastes 9:12). Jesus also thought of man as a fish to be caught, but rather than entrapping him in his sins by the law, He sent out His disciples to catch people with the Gospel for the Kingdom of God (Matt. 4:19).

According to Maharam Yafo, the Tashlich ritual is based on an interpretation of a story in the Midrash. "As Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, Satan disguised himself as a raging river. Upon approaching the river, Abraham went in wading up to his waist. Thinking he would be able to ford the river, he summoned Isaac and they had taken but a few steps when the water surged up to their necks. Abraham cried out 'Deliver us, Adonai, for the water is drowning us,' and they were saved."(8) The identification of Rosh Hashanah with the sacrifice of Isaac is an important part of this holiday, as seen in section VI.

III. THEOPHANY

Exodus 19:16-20 The third reason for blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is to recall that God's appearance to Israel on Mount Sinai was accompanied by thunder, lightning, thick cloud and a very strong blast from a shofar. The blowing of trumpets accompanied the appearance of kings, as we saw above. When a king appeared to his people, it was usually to address them with a message or an edict. The Lord's appearance on Sinai was for the purpose of giving the law, the Torah, which is of supreme importance to Israel. The Spring festival of Shavuoth celebrates the giving of the law, and the long summer months are devoid of any festival until Rosh Hashanah comes. Like the Church's Pentecost season which parallels this identically, this is a time to respond to the call of God by laboring in the fields. When the labor is almost over, Israel ends up where she began: with the unchanging Word of God in the giving of the Law.



The Son of God came to be with man without the fearful sound of trumpets, for He came to save us from the law, not judge us by it. Yet end time images frequently include the sounding of trumpets as will be seen in Section X. This will be a time of law for those who are not in Christ. We might note that the Christian understanding of the law as that which accuses and condemns, gives some the impression that the law is the bad news which urges us toward the good news of the Gospel. The Jewish person approaches the law with fear and trembling (v. 16b), and yet it is received with joy because it is God's message of life for His people. He speaks of *Torah* of which the English word "law" is an inadequate translation. Psalm 119 is a good example of how God's people are at once awe-struck by and in love with the Torah. After the sacrifice of Yom Kippur, which the believer in Jesus understands is fulfilled in the crucifixion, and the festival of Sukkoth which anticipates the final

ingathering of souls, comes the festival of Simchat Torah -- Rejoicing in the Law. Rabbis are known to dance with the Torah scrolls in their arms for great joy on this day. In Jesus, the law being fulfilled in its power to punish and condemn, we can all the more rejoice in the commandments of the Lord as a wonderful way to live, and a way to demonstrate our love for God. "If you love me," Jesus said, "keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Not in terror, but in joyful confidence we may stand with our forefathers at Sinai in the presence of God Almighty and respond "We will do, and we will listen!" (Exodus 24:7).



IV. WORDS OF WARNING

Ezekiel 33:1-20 The fourth reason for sounding the shofar is to remember the warnings of the prophets. Such warnings are to sound out like the blast of trumpets (v. 4,5). The prophetic warnings were often warnings to the people that they must repent from their evil deeds. As in Ez. 18:30ff, God does not desire the death of anyone, and if anyone is lost it is because of a persistent and willful disobedience on the part of that person. Prophetic warnings are sent so that no one might be lost out of ignorance of God and ignorance of the law. Disregarding prophetic warnings will result in one's blood being upon one's own head.

This prophecy reiterates the proper answer to Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The prophet has a responsibility to clearly speak the warnings of the Lord. If he fails to speak them, or fails to make them clear, then the blood of those who are lost is counted against the prophet. The community of Israel is to be especially vigilant during these awesome days of repentance. Individuals are not only watchful about their own relationship with God, but should warn and encourage others to repent as well. Ezekiel's prophecy might well be taken as a relevant warning to the church today. For often the church has been guilty of preaching to her own members about salvation, while at the same time making little or no effort to evangelize those round about her. Especially among Jewish people, whom God calls His First Born, the Church has been reticent to share the message of Jesus as the only way to the Father. Because the message will be unwelcomed more often than not is no excuse for not telling it.

As watchmen and modern day prophets and custodians of the Word of God, we must sound the warning, that some might be saved. There are some who out of sheer obedience to the Word will speak the Words of the Gospel to their neighbors and say "I have done my duty, my responsibility is over." They will not take the time to consider how their message is being received, or whether or not it is being understood. The prophet's responsibility is to sound a *clear* warning. Blowing the trumpet to warn that the enemy is near in such a half-hearted or careless way that many do not hear, and those who do hear do not believe it is a genuine warning, is no better than not blowing the trumpet at all. Paul chides the Corinthians for doing just this. After emphasizing the importance of prophecy *i.e.* bringing the will of God to God's people in a relevant and understandable way, Paul says, "If a bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8).



V. ALARM

Jeremiah 4:13-22 Like the prophetic warning, the trumpet also sounds a call to war. Jerusalem fell and the temple was ruined by the Babylonian army because of their disobedience. Because Israel did not obey the call to repentance when they heard the trumpet of warning, now they hear the trumpet of war (v. 19b). One of the three types of shofar calls sounded at this festival is *teruah*--alarm. This is a series of at least nine short blasts in rapid succession which is eerie and terrifying enough to awake any from sleep that they might prepare for battle.(9)

The sorrow of witnessing the destruction of the temple recorded by Jeremiah is familiar to the Jewish people since the year 70, when the most recent temple was destroyed. Each new year the blowing of the shofar of war and alarm reminds the people that they are yet under the curse and consequences of sin; separated from God with no temple and no sacrifices. But the trumpet of alarm also sounds a message of hope, that perhaps in this new year the rebuilding of the temple will begin.

Not Judah alone, but all the world is unsettled by the alarm of war. The follower of Jesus is even aware of a battle raging between flesh and spirit within his own being. For us the trumpet of the attacking

enemy can be drowned out by our own trumpets of war as we follow Messiah into the ultimate victory over sin, death and the devil. The trumpets of war herald a victory parade as we anticipate the heavenly Jerusalem, and our dwelling with the Most High forever through the merits of His Son.

Ephesians 5:14 "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Alarms not only awaken people from sleep, but from complacency. It is he who is awake to the warnings and the guidance of Jesus each day who will endure the evil day and stand with Messiah at the last.

1 Cor. 15:52, 1 Thess. 4:16 When the Lord returns at the end of time, He will come with the sound of the trumpet; and all the dead will rise. We sing about that in hymns, as in the stanza: "Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth, Thro' sepulchers it ringeth, All before the throne it bringeth" (*The Lutheran Hymnal* 607, v. 3). The judgment theme applies to those who confess that God has already come in Jesus, even though the trumpet does not sound until the "second" coming. That "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17), is a consistent emphasis throughout both testaments.



VI. FAITHFULNESS & OBEDIENCE

Genesis 22:1-18 The shofar is made of the horn of a ram. This recalls the ram which was caught in the thicket by his horns which God made available to Abraham to offer up in place of his son Isaac (v. 13). The story of the faithfulness of Abraham and the willingness of Isaac to be sacrificed is the central Torah reading for Rosh Hashanah, and is the sixth reason for sounding the shofar.

We see in this story the principle of offering up the firstborn of God's purposes, and the principle of vicarious atonement. Perfect obedience to God means that there is nothing else that is as important as the will of God for His people. Even the promise and purpose of God which Isaac represented to the best of Abraham's knowledge, must not come before obedience. Abraham's intention to sacrifice his only son, the only hope for future generations, in obedience to God's call speaks of a faith far beyond the scope of almost any other believer.

Vv. 15-18 Abraham was faithful. It was that faith, that relationship with God, which outweighed any of Abraham's sins. Perhaps this is why this reading was chosen for Rosh Hashanah: it speaks of faith and relationship in contrast to the accounting of sin and righteousness during the Awesome Days. Abraham believed and it was "reckoned to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). His faith was not merely a trust, but a hand that received an alien righteousness (Cf. Rom. 8:32, 4:3,9, 22-3).

Abraham was tested, and when His intentions were clear, God intervened at the last minute, as He so often does, and provided a way for escape. The justice of God held that there had to be a sacrifice, but the mercy of God provided a ram in the place of Isaac.

When God's only Son came to deal with sin once and for all, a sacrifice had to be made. And like the death of Isaac, the price for our sin is too dear for us to pay. So God provided not a ram, but a Lamb, a perfect and spotless Lamb, as worthy to be sacrificed in our place. To adequately atone, the lamb had to be perfect, and the only perfect Lamb was the Only Begotten Son. The Heavenly Father did for us what He did not require of Abraham, the death of his Son for the sin of the world. As the sixth trumpet of Rosh Hashanah recalls the willingness of Isaac to be sacrificed for Israel, it reminds the new Israel of Jesus who was willing to lay down His life for His friends.



VII. FEAR AND TREMBLING

Amos 3:1-8 The seventh reason for blowing the shofar is the subjective response to the cries of warning and alarm: *terror*. Anyone who has heard the blowing of a shofar knows that it is a very strange and frightening sound. This is especially true of those who recognize that the trumpet sound heralds judgment for sin -- sin of which they are guilty. This passage of Scripture sets sin and judgment in a cause and effect relationship. The lion roars when he has prey, the snare snaps when it has been tripped, and the people tremble when they hear the trumpet (vv. 4-6).

Fear among God's people seems like a negative thing at first, but it is the prerequisite to humility and repentance. It is precisely because Israel is the Lord's

people that He punishes them (v. 2). God chastens those whom He loves (cf. Heb. 12:6, Rev. 3:19, Ps. 94:12). A people which is terrified is one that humbles itself under the hand of God. It is rather those who are indifferent to the trumpet of judgment, who do not heed the warning of the prophets of God, that will perish.

The seventh reason links the themes of warning and repentance with the theme of judgment.



VIII. FINAL JUDGMENT

Zephaniah 1:12-18 The fall festivals of Israel are eschatological in their scope. Even as Passover reflects for the believer in Jesus the sacrifice of the Messiah, and Shavuoth reflects the labor of the church, so Rosh Hashanah points to the end times when the final harvest will be gathered. Israel recognized that after the atonement at Yom Kippur the joyful days of Sukkoth anticipate the eternal kingdom of heaven. The preparation for this during Rosh Hashanah and the Awesome Days has a theme much like that of Advent. In fact, preparation for the Lord's coming is so significant to this time that during the entire month of Elul, prior to Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is to be blown each morning to remind the people to prepare their hearts and lives.

The apocalyptic emphasis of Zephaniah includes the sounding of trumpets (v. 16), which speaks of battle cries of spiritual warfare that are every bit as devastating, if not more so, than the bitter defeat of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. The day of ultimate judgment is a day of terror for the world, and the only hope there is will come from Messiah, who will strengthen His people to endure and forgive their iniquities so that they might stand before God in evil days.

Joel 2 "Blow the trumpet in Zion," says the prophet. This trumpet is one of dread and of alarm. It heralds a final battle when the world will be destroyed by fire, and all the people will be ravaged. The enemy will be inescapable, and their devastation complete (vv. 2-10).

V. 11 Yet the shofar also calls the faithful to arms. This is a time of fear for some, but it is also a time for the army of the Lord to take courage and fight the hoards of evil. Though many have strayed, still the army of God is very large, and they are invincible because their weapon is the Word of God.

Vv. 13-14 Even at this late date when the entire world is in ruins, the Lord still allows an opportunity for repentance. The Lord is so gracious that He is even forbearing on the very day of judgment. This theme is also most clear in Rev. 8-10. Here seven angels are blowing trumpets, one at a time. Each trumpet heralds another phase of doom and destruction. Yet the seventh angel offers a bittersweet scroll which sends prophets out among the peoples and nations yet another time (Rev. 10:11).

V. 15-17 Joel instructs Israel to blow the trumpet in Zion once again, this time to call the solemn assembly to sanctify the people and beseech the Lord with prayer and fasting to spare His people. This is an obvious reference to the holy convocation prescribed in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29. Thus the theme of judgment gives way to hope as the Lord calls His people to repentance once more.

Vv. 18-27 If the people repent, even at this late time, the Lord will have pity on them, comforting and restoring them. The promise of rain is the hope of Israel at the fall festivals: God will revive His people for another season. The imagery in these verses is harvest imagery. The resulting bounty after repentance and sacrifice is the theme of the three fall festivals.

Vv. 28-32 The harvest bounty will include the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the resulting power and gifts will be effective in the gathering for the last prophetic harvest. Then the end will come.



"Shanah
Tovah"
[Good
Year]

IX. THE HOLY CONVOCATION

Numbers 29:1-6 The basic scriptural stipulation for Tishri 1 is to call a holy convocation with the blowing of trumpets. The gathering of the people is the ninth reason for blowing the shofar.

Isaiah 27:12-13 Jewish people have looked with sadness at their scattered condition which began with the Assyrian conquest of Samaria. Today they are yet scattered over the face of the earth. Certainly the final shofar will be a convocation of God's people, calling them from the far corners of the earth to assemble in Jerusalem. Zionists see this happening already as the land of Israel blooms and puts forth shoots (Is. 27:6). Yet more than a gathering of the people to the land, there is a hope that those who have perished in exile throughout the years will again assemble with God's people in the end time. Their purpose for the gathering will no longer need be sacrifice, they will gather to worship God on His holy mountain (v. 13).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 The hope of gathering the living and the dead in the last times is realized in Jesus. When the trumpet sounds, the scattered bones and molecules of flesh long returned to dust will be gathered from the very ends of the earth to be resurrected with body and soul intact, glorified as was Jesus on Easter morning. The final harvest will not be for the living to enjoy until the dead are resurrected, that all might gather from the corners of the world and from the dust of ages to celebrate together the feast of the Lamb, and go in as one people to be forever with the Lord. The comfort that Israel seeks at Rosh Hashanah is realized through the resurrection of Jesus.

X. FUTURE HOPE

Isaiah 18:1-7 The hope of the resurrection gathering of God's people at the end time is the theme of the tenth reason for blowing the shofar. When the trumpet sounds, however, it is not only to gather the people of Israel, but it can be heard throughout the world. In this case Egypt, that ancient foe of Israel, is warned to heed the call of the shofar and assemble with Israel at the harvest. The Lord has been quietly going about His business, preparing His dwelling. When the harvest begins, the nations who have ears to hear will come to the gathering, bringing gifts. Perhaps the advent of the Magi in Matthew 2 is an early fulfillment of this prophecy.

The prophet Zechariah (14:16-18) proclaims that the nations who seek the Lord will gather for the harvest festival of Booths to enjoy the eternal bounty of God. This is the result of the universal call to worship, heralded by the shofar at the last Rosh Hashanah.

The future hope for Israel and for the world is symbolized by the shofar itself. To look at a shofar, one can see the similarity of its shape to the hebrew letter *Resh* [ר]. As

the Hebrew characters are read from right to left, we might observe that the resh has its back to the past. What is past is over. The resh stands erect and tall, as we might stand in the presence of God, confident in His mercy and forgiveness. The head of the resh is pointing ahead to the left. It is open to the future, and therefore is a symbol of hope.⁽¹⁰⁾ Is it any wonder that the first letter in the word *rosh*--head (as in *Rosh Hashanah*--head of the year) is the *resh*? The new year looks ahead with hope, standing in confidence that God has closed the books on our sin of the past. And how appropriate for us, the Body of Messiah, to consider Jesus as our *Head*. Following Him through cross to glory, we stand all the more confidently, seeing just how effectively Jesus closes the book of iniquity and opens up for us an eternal future which proceeds from one glory to another.

Revelation 1:10 The sound of the trumpet heralds warning and comfort, destruction and restoration, fear and courage, death and life. As St. John was worshipping in the Spirit on the sabbath, he found to be true what we might have already suspected: *the sound of the shofar is the very voice of God.*



FOOTNOTES: ROSH HASHANAH

1. Rabbi Saadiah Ben Joseph, Gaon, (c. 882-942 A.D.). Egyptian-born scholar who ministered among Arabic speaking Jews.

2. Introduction to the Psalm, *The Metsudah Machzor*, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1983. *Rosh Hashanah*, p. 282.

3. Footnote to the Psalm, *Ibid*, p. 283.

4. The Text of the *Avinu Malkenu* appears in the worship section of this work. It was written by Rabbi Akiva (c. 50-c. 135 A.D.).

5. Introduction to the *Machzor* by Avrohom Davis, *The Metsudah Machzor* p. viii. *Rambam* is the anagrammatic title for Rabbi Moses Ben Maimun, better known as Maimonides, a famous Spanish rabbi (1135-1204).


6. Victor Buksbazen. *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*. Ft. Wash, PA 1954. p. 25.

7. Martha Zimmerman has written a Messianic Tashlich service in *Celebrate the Feasts*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1981. pp. 141-43.

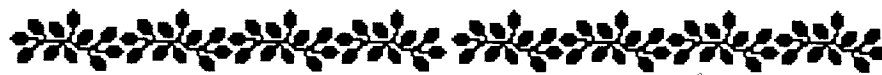
8. Introduction to *Tashlich*. *The Metsudah Machzor* for Rosh Hashanah. p. 445.

9. There are four distinct types of sounds from the shofar which are as follows: *Tekiah*--blast: one long clear tone. *Shevarim*--broken sounds: three short calls together as one *tekiah*. *Teruah*--alarm: A rapid series of at least nine very short notes, also roughly equalling one *tekiah* in length. *Tekiah gedolah*--the big blast: one long *tekiah*, held as long as there is breath in the blower. This, and other interesting information on the shofar can be found in *The Jewish Catalogue*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1973. pp. 64-72.

10. Zimmerman, p. 130.



יום כפור



Chapter 4. YOM KIPPUR



n considering the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), we not only learn something of the practice and customs of Israel and modern Judaism, but we also confront the central concern of our Gospel, *viz.* the forgiveness of our sins through the atoning work of Jesus the Messiah. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross fulfills for His people the intent of the Day of Atonement. Through Jesus we have forgiveness and new life; through Him we have personal access to the Father.

Yom Kippur falls on the tenth day of Tishri. It is closely related to Rosh Hashanah, the new year (Tishri 1) in that it is a culmination of a period of contrition begun on Rosh Hashanah. This most austere and solemn of days in the Jewish calendar is observed by complete fasting which is mandatory for all Jews, with the only exceptions being young children, sick persons and pregnant women. The problem of sin and guilt was on the minds of the people of Israel as they constantly fell short of a satisfying relationship with their God. The Lord instituted the annual fast in Leviticus 16 to deal with this concern and to present Israel with the model of substitutionary blood of atonement upon which their ultimate reconciliation with God would be based.

I. HIGH PRIEST AS MEDIATOR

Leviticus 16:2 The Lord's instructions to Moses concerning Aaron and presumably his high-priestly successors limit access to the Holy of Holies, that room behind the veil in the tabernacle containing the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. Aaron could not present himself before the Lord any time he wished and in any condition. He had to make elaborate preparations before he could enter, and, in accordance with vv. 29 and 34, his entry, regardless of preparation, was only possible on the Yom Kippur. The promise of the gospel is seen in the Shekinah, or cloud of God's glorious presence. Yet the law limits access to this mercy in order to demonstrate to man that there is no way that he can come to God; rather he must wait upon the Lord at the proper time and place for atonement to be made.

Vv. 3-5 The High Priest must prepare for his entrance into the Holy of Holies by bathing (cleansing with water has always been seen as an outward sign of purification in Israel) and by wearing the holy

white linen garments. The humble linen clothing worn by the High Priest in later years was in sharp contrast to the ornate finery worn for the initial sacrifice and on other feast days.

Further insight into the observance of this day during the monarchy may be gained from reading the Tractate Yoma in the Mishna.⁽¹⁾ The High Priest was to have left his home seven days prior to the fast and taken up residence in his apartment in the temple (Yoma 1). He would officiate at the daily sacrifice during this time and devote himself to intense study and rehearsal of the solemn rites he would perform on Yom Kippur. On the evening before the fast, the High Priest would begin an all-night vigil during which time the elders further rehearsed the rites with him and admonished him to weep during the vigil. The younger priests read to him to keep him awake. Obviously such preparation was an attempt to balance the honor of being High Priest with the awesome responsibility of being Israel's representative before the Lord of the Universe.

Remembering that unworthy entrance into the Holy of Holies meant death (*cf.* Lev. 16:2), it was a well-prepared and frightened High Priest who donned the sacred garments. Indeed some popular tradition suggests that the people tied a rope around the High Priest so that in the event that he was struck dead they could retrieve his body without entering the holy place. Again, this makes us aware that this was a legal means of atonement by which forgiveness was just barely acquired against the unfavorable situation of God's wrath.

V. 6 In addition to the bathing of the high priest, his own sins had to be reckoned with before he had any business pleading for Israel's pardon. Therefore a young bull was sacrificed in the usual area of the temple court. Before the bull was slaughtered, the High Priest confessed his own sins, placing his hands on the head of the bull. A similar confession prefaced each of the rites on the Yom Kippur, and each ended with the pronunciation of the sacred tetragrammaton ייִהוָה "YHWH." This holy and unpronounceable name (Yahweh and Jehovah are modern attempts) was commonly read in the scriptures with the substitute "Adonai," which means "Lord." The true pronouncement of the name was known only to the officiating priests and could be uttered by them alone on Yom Kippur. Like the entering of the Holy of Holies, the pronouncement of "Hashem"--"the Name"--was risking death; all the more reason for scrupulous preparation to be made. The audacious act of sinful mortals calling the Almighty by name was a risk that had to be taken by the priests so that the essential atonement of God and man could be made.

Vv. 7-9 After the atonement for the sins of the priesthood had been made, the High Priest was ritually adequate to stand in the people's place to make atonement for their sins. Previous to the priest's entrance into the holy place with incense, two identical goats had been brought forth and the High Priest had picked two lots out of an urn, one labelled "for the Lord" and the other "for Azazel." He would face the goats and assign the one on the left the lot in his left hand and likewise on the right side. When the lot was proclaimed "for the Lord" the tetragrammaton was pronounced and the typical response of the attending priests was "Blessed be the Name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever" (Yoma 4:1).

Vv. 11-14 After the High Priest confessed his sins over the bull, the bull was slaughtered. Then the high priest took the blood of the bull and incense into the Holy of Holies. According to the Mishna, the practice in later Israel was to perform this rite in two stages.(2) The High Priest would first go behind the veil with live coals on a censer in his right hand and a container of finely crushed incense in the left. While the Church has generally viewed incense as a symbol of ascending prayer (Ps. 33:18-23), v. 13 suggests that its use here is more that of a smoke screen to protect the imperfect priest from the devastating effect of the full glory of the Lord on the mercy seat. This is consistent with Exodus 33:18-23 where Moses hears the sacred name and sees the Lord's back, but cannot see His face for Moses' own protection. The censer was set on the poles of the ark of the covenant and left there throughout the ensuing rites to ensure continuing protection for the High Priest.



After this, the High Priest retired to the nave of the temple to pray and returned to the Holy of Holies with the blood of the bull in a bowl. This blood was spattered once on the mercy seat (*kapporeth*) and seven times on the front of the ark to atone for the priest's own sins and the sins of the rest of the priesthood. The word "*Kapporeth*" and "*kippur*" share the same Hebrew root "*Kapper*" which has the meaning of "covering." The concept of atonement was that of a covering over of sin by the Lord (Ps. 32:1, Rom. 4:6-8, Ps. 85:2). Since the mercy seat was the "cover" for the Ark of the Covenant, it made a consistent word-symbol on this Yom Kippur, identifying the blood on the covering of the ark with the blood covering the people's sins. A more recent practice of "*Kapperoth*" is also related to this covering sacrifice and will be discussed later.

V. 15 The goat designated "for the Lord" was slaughtered and the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies a third time with its blood, sprinkling it on the *Kapporeth* and the front of the ark in the same manner as he had done for himself and the priesthood.

Vv. 16-19 After this, the High Priest returned to the nave and sprinkled the veil seven times with the bull's blood and seven more with the goat's. Then the remaining blood was mixed and sprinkled on the incense altar. The point of this was to cleanse the place of meeting from the uncleanness of Israel for another year, and to focus on prayer. Once again the people could come near to God in the tabernacle without terrible amounts of fear.



II. THE BLOOD OF ATONEMENT

Leviticus 17:11 Atonement comes only by blood. This is because the life of the flesh is in the blood. The shedding of blood is death, and this is the price for sin (Jer. 31:29; Rom. 6:23). The substitution of the blood of beasts for the blood of a sinner was the means God chose to cover sin. In viewing the awful, bloody scene, the sinner is made acutely aware of the terrible price for iniquity and what he personally deserved but for the covering of God's mercy. This, of course, was a legal means of atonement and an impersonal one. The rituals described above eventually lost some of their impact as the intentions behind them gave way to a practice observed as compliance to the law. By Jesus' day, the sacrificial system had simply become a business (Mark 11:15-17). After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., rabbinic teaching abandoned the blood atonement by necessity and focused on repentance.

Hebrews 9:19-21 In recounting the duties of the High Priest under the old covenant, the writer to the Hebrews points out that blood was what purified the temple and the

people. The reason given is that a will is sealed at death and only through death is an immutable inheritance possible (Heb. 9:16-18). The will of God to be at one with His people was then only inheritable when there was death to sin (manifested by the shedding of blood.)

V. 22 Under the law, almost everything is purified by blood; there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. While this is not stated in the Old Testament in so many words, the weight of evidence in the preponderance of sacrifices in ancient Israel points to this truth. Indeed the Talmud declares in more recent times (Yoma 5a), "There is no atonement except with blood."⁽³⁾ Such a passage reflects the same kind of Biblical thinking that formed the basis of Heb. 9:22.

After the priest was finished with the blood, the excess was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. From there it ran through special pipes to the banks of the Kidron where it decomposed and was later sold as fertilizer for the fields (Yoma 5:6).

From this we see that there was no intrinsic sacred value in the blood--it was important only as the means by which God acted for His people.



III. THE INADEQUACY OF THE OLD COVENANT

Hebrews 9:11-14 As indicated above, the ritual offering of the blood of beasts was not a personal sacrifice, and became less and less effective in symbolic value as the ritual became more and more routine. Jesus took with Him into the Holy of Holies (heaven itself) His own personal blood to atone for the people. For those who enter into a personal relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, His blood is not only a cleansing from sin, but speaks of a commitment and a total sacrifice on the part of Almighty God which is beyond our comprehension.

2 Samuel 21:1-6 Substitutionary atonement by means of one person's death in place of another was not at all foreign to Israel. In this example the Lord has caused a famine in Israel in retribution for Saul's destruction of the Gibeonites. Although this was not a tribe of Israel,

Israel had sworn to spare them. The famine was a result of the breaking of this covenant made before God with the Gibeonites. Like most covenants, it is likely that this one was sealed in blood. The Scripture calls Saul's sin "blood-guiltiness," and David must make an expiation, or pay a ransom, to make things right with God and with Gibeon. The word "expiation" in v. 3 is "*kapper*," the covering atonement central to the Yom Kippur. The requirement turns out to be the lives of Saul's family in place of Saul's sin. We see here, then, a bridge between the "covering" of sin with the animal blood of the old covenant and the personal blood of the new covenant which deals with sin through the death of the righteous for the unrighteous (Rom. 3:25).

Consistent with the theme of the personal substitutionary atonement, it is interesting to note that the appointed Scripture reading for Yom Kippur is the near drowning of Jonah. Remembering the close relationship of this holy day to Rosh Hashanah, we further note that the main reading for that day is the near sacrifice of Isaac.



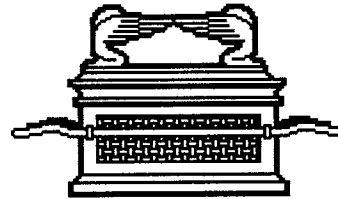
KAPPEROTH

The necessity of blood atonement is still a concern for the Orthodox Jews today, especially with no temple, no priesthood and no sacrifices. The modern practice of "*Kapparoth*" (coverings) involves the symbolic transference of one's guilt to a fowl, much as the High Priest confessed his sins over the head of the bull in the ancient Yom Kippur observance. The fowl is then waved over the penitent's head three times with the words "This bird is a sacrifice in my stead; this is my ransom, this is my atonement (*kapparoth*). This fowl shall meet death, but we shall find a long and pleasant life of peace."⁽⁴⁾ The fowl are then distributed to the poor for their nourishment.

This act of charity in connection with *kapparoth* has been seen since the destruction of the temple as a type of reparation for sin. Today, even where the waving of the fowl has fallen into disuse among the more reformed Jews, acts of charity are invariably linked to the Yom Kippur. Here we note that in modern Hebrew usage, "charity" and "righteousness" are synonymous. In contrast the

Greek of the New Testament identified charity with love (*agape*). 1 Peter 4:8 declares "charity **COVERS** a multitude of sins."

Other substitutes for the blood of the sacrifice in modern Judaism include repentance, prayer, fasting and the study of the law.



Some extreme rabbinic teaching on such substitutionary sacrifice points to personal suffering and death as means of atonement. Some very orthodox Jews of Eastern Europe were known in recent history to inflict 39 whip lashes upon themselves, a practice called "*malkoth*." "Forty lashes less one" was a common ancient form of corporal punishment such as the Jewish authorities inflicted on St. Paul on five occasions for his teachings about Jesus (2 Cor. 11:24). Some rabbis have further taught that one's own death atones for sin, basing this on Ps. 116:15, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."⁽⁵⁾ While this teaching plainly points to the need of a personal sacrifice, it overlooks the fact that no one is saintly or righteous (*Chasid*) enough to make his death thus precious, save the perfect and holy Messiah.

Hebrews 9:23-10:22 The writer to the Hebrews completes the thought. The priesthood, the sacrifices, even the temple itself were but shadows and symbols of the reality of God's plan of salvation through Jesus, our High Priest. With the establishment of a new covenant through the personal, bloody sacrifice of Almighty God on behalf of His beloved people, the old methods of atonement pass away. The substance of the Yom Kippur for us is effectively realized in the body and blood of the Messiah.

Romans 3:9-14 Righteousness is not in any way a possibility for man.

Vv. 19-20 The law requires righteousness, and there is nothing anyone can pay that will put man right with God -- even if one pays with one's own life.

Vv. 21-26 God's only recourse under the law was to destroy man or to pass over man's sins with divine forbearance. Yet ultimate atonement must be made with worthy blood -- the blood of Jesus the Messiah. Here we see the righteousness of God is not only with respect to justice, but also in respect to grace: Jesus, the only worthy man, made the willing sacrifice for us as a free gift. Justification is not apart from the law; it is ours by faith in Jesus.



IV. THE SCAPEGOAT

Leviticus 16:10 After the two sacrifices and the sprinkling of blood, the second of the two identical goats, the one which had been proclaimed as "for Azazel," now became the focal point of the observance.

Vv. 20-22 The High Priest was to confess the sins of Israel over the head of this goat in much the same way he had confessed his own sin over the head of the bull. In the prescription for cleansing lepers (Lev. 14:6-7), we see a transference of the disease to a living bird which is sent away. In the same way there is a transference of guilt upon the goat which is then sent away into the wilderness. This symbolized a removal of guilt from the camp.

There was a great psychological insight into the guilt of the individual in this act. For while there were two sacrifices and the sprinkling of blood to make the tabernacle of God's presence free from sin, there still was a product of that sin, the people's guilt, which had to be dealt with. So, to dramatize the implications of the atoning sacrifice, the guilt of the people was concentrated on the scapegoat.

The goat was chased into the wilderness by a man appointed for the task. As time passed, the people took more and more of a part in the shunning of the scapegoat.

The route leading over the Kidron and into the desert was lined with people, who, according to the Mishna (*Yoma 6:4*), would urge the goat to begone, pricking it, spitting on it and pulling out its wool. This practice is astoundingly similar to the treatment of the suffering servant predicted in Isaiah 53. Modern Judaism seeks to discourage the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 from being identified with the Messiah, but an ancient prayer to be said on Yom Kippur states:

"Our righteous Messiah has departed from us, we are horror-stricken and have none to justify us. Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions He carries who is wounded because of our transgression. He bears on His shoulder the burden of our sins, to find pardon for all our iniquities. By His stripes we shall be healed -- O Eternal One, it is time that Thou shouldst create Him anew!"(6)

Certainly the heart of Judaism longs for a Messiah who like a scapegoat will carry away the sin of the people.

As the scapegoat left the sanctuary, a scarlet ribbon was tied on the sanctuary door, and another around the goat's neck, representing blood-guiltiness. In later tradition, the goat was chased from station to station until at the edge of a steep cliff, where a man tied the free end of the ribbon on the goat around a large rock and pushed it with the goat over the edge of the cliff to the goat's death. The goat, which was to vanish into the wilderness was thus aided in its disappearance. Israel was assured that the goat would never re-enter her camp with her sins. A legend in the Mishna states (*Yoma 6:8*) that at the very moment the goat plunged to its death, the ribbon on the sanctuary door turned white (*cf. Isaiah 1:18*). This symbol must have occurred to many on Good Friday when the veil of the temple separating God's presence from His people was torn asunder at the very moment that Jesus died on a hill outside the city (Mark 15:38).

Zechariah 12:10-14 The mourning of Israel on the Day of Atonement was not only a national mourning, but an individual one as well. Each person was to go apart and think on their God whose heart was pierced by their sin. Never was the price for sin more terribly visible as when we looked on the Son of Man pierced by the transgressions of His people in order to make final reconciliation between God and man.

Leviticus 16:10 The meaning of the designation "Azazel" is not clear. It no doubt connects with some unholy spirit. Popular mythology in Israel considered that the wilderness was full of desert demons, and possibly the goat was thought to become one of these. The identification of the goat with the demonic survives in occult mysticism to this day. In the book of Enoch (6:7; 8:1; 13) Azazel is the chief of the fallen angels -- it is another name for Satan. In the same way Jesus became the scapegoat for us, bearing in His own body the sin of the world -- He became sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21)

Vv. 23-28 The final part of the Yom Kippur ceremony involved another cleansing of the High Priest. He was to enter the Holy of Holies for a fourth and final time to retrieve the censer from the ark. Other clean-up operations included completely burning the remains of the sacrifices outside the tabernacle, and cleansing the man who chased the scapegoat out of the camp so he could return.



V. THE OBSERVANCE IN PERPETUITY

Leviticus 16:29-33 This observance was to take place each year for all time. In the new covenant, Jesus is a sacrifice once and for all, and He justifies God's people not once a year, but consistently for all eternity (Heb. 7:27-28). This is because, unlike the Levitical succession of priests who each died, the Messiah Jesus lives and reigns forever as our Great High Priest (Heb. 7:23-25).

Traditionally, Yom Kippur ends with a blast of the shofar (trumpet) completing the cycle begun with the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. The book of accounting was said to be opened each year on the new year and closed when the atonement was complete. During that time Jewish people greet one another with the words "may your name be inscribed in the book of life." After Yom Kippur the greeting changes to "may you be 'sealed' in the book of life." As blood seals all covenants, so it seals the man of God into a living relationship with his Creator and Redeemer.

The inadequacy of being sealed in a book on the basis of one's merits or demerits as a means of justification is obvious. How we praise God who in His grace loves us and does not keep a record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:5-6). For if the Lord did keep track of our iniquity, who could stand? (Psalm 130:3). The sealing of names in the book of life is a symbol used through the book of Revelation (chapters 3,7,13,17,21,22). Here the inscribing and sealing is not described in terms of deeds but in terms of relationship to the Lamb.

Since the theme of Yom Kippur deals with the canceling of debts from the book of life, the human counterpart of inter-personal forgiveness should also follow. Unlike the teaching of Jesus where one forgives another because God has forgiven him, the one who owes the debt to another declares that he is released and absolved from all debts incurred in the previous year. This declaration takes place in the sacred prayer called the "*Kol Nedrei*" (sometimes spelled *Kol Nidre*) or "All Vows." Many outside Judaism criticize the *Kol Nedrei* as an evasion of responsibility, however the intention of the prayer is the acknowledgement that mankind is not only incapable of adequately repaying God, but there are even sins committed against each other which can never be completely repaid. If the guilt of Israel was going to disappear with the scapegoat, then individuals should no longer be reminded of what someone had against them for more than the period of a year. A section of the *Kol Nedrei* is printed in Appendix D.

After the end of the solemn Yom Kippur fast, there was joyous singing and dancing which culminated in the harvest festival of Sukkoth five days later (Tishri 15). And who can be more joyous than those who by the blood of Jesus have forgiveness and eternal peace with God?



...I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the

throne and worshiped God, saying "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might to our God for ever and ever! Amen."

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come? ...These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

(Rev. 7:9-14 RSV)



FOOTNOTES: YOM KIPPUR

1. The Mishna reflects the traditions surrounding the practices prescribed in the law (*Torah*). Such traditions were handed down orally and in this case were codified by Judah the Prince late in the Second Century A.D. *The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary* suggests that the material in the Mishna may date back as far as 50 A.D. The Mishna was an antecedent of the Talmud which reached its final form around the year 500. While most of the rabbinic material quoted in this paper comes from the Tractate "Yoma" (referring to the *DAY* of Atonement) as written in the Midrash by Rabbi Judah, there is also a commentary on this material in the Babylonian Talmud entitled "Yoma" from a later time.

2. Popular consideration of the events of Yom Kippur outline the two entrances of

the high priest into the holy place which are prescribed in Leviticus 16, one for the priestly sacrifice and one for the sacrifice of the people. The Midrash adds to this two more entrances which are of minor significance: an initial entrance with the incense, and a final entrance to retrieve the censer at the end of the ceremonies.

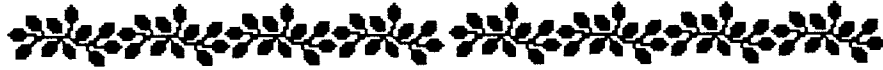
3. This quote is from the "Yoma" of the Babylonian Talmud.

4. Philip Birnbaum, *Daily Prayer Book (Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem)*, New York, 1949. p. 674.

5. Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*, Ft. Washington PA, 1954. p. 34.

6. *Ibid.* pp. 42-43.





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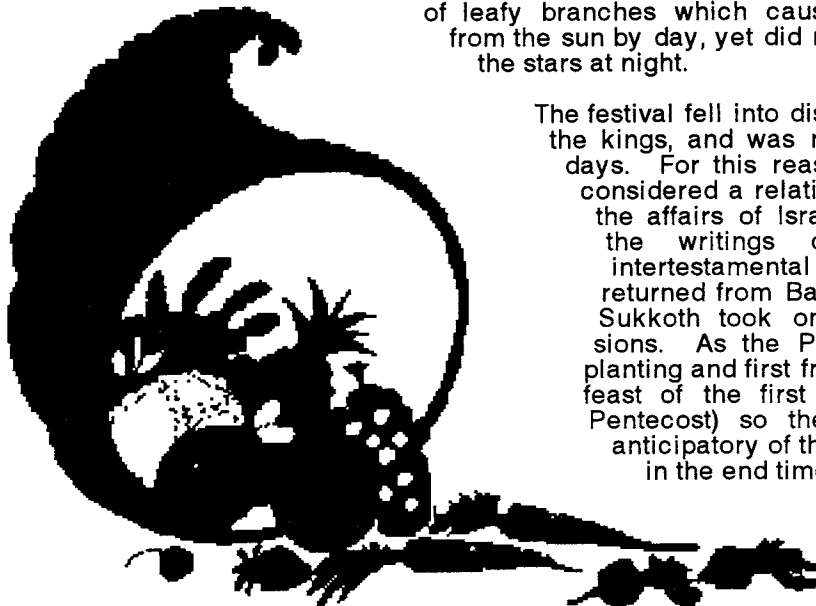
Chapter 5. SUKKOTH



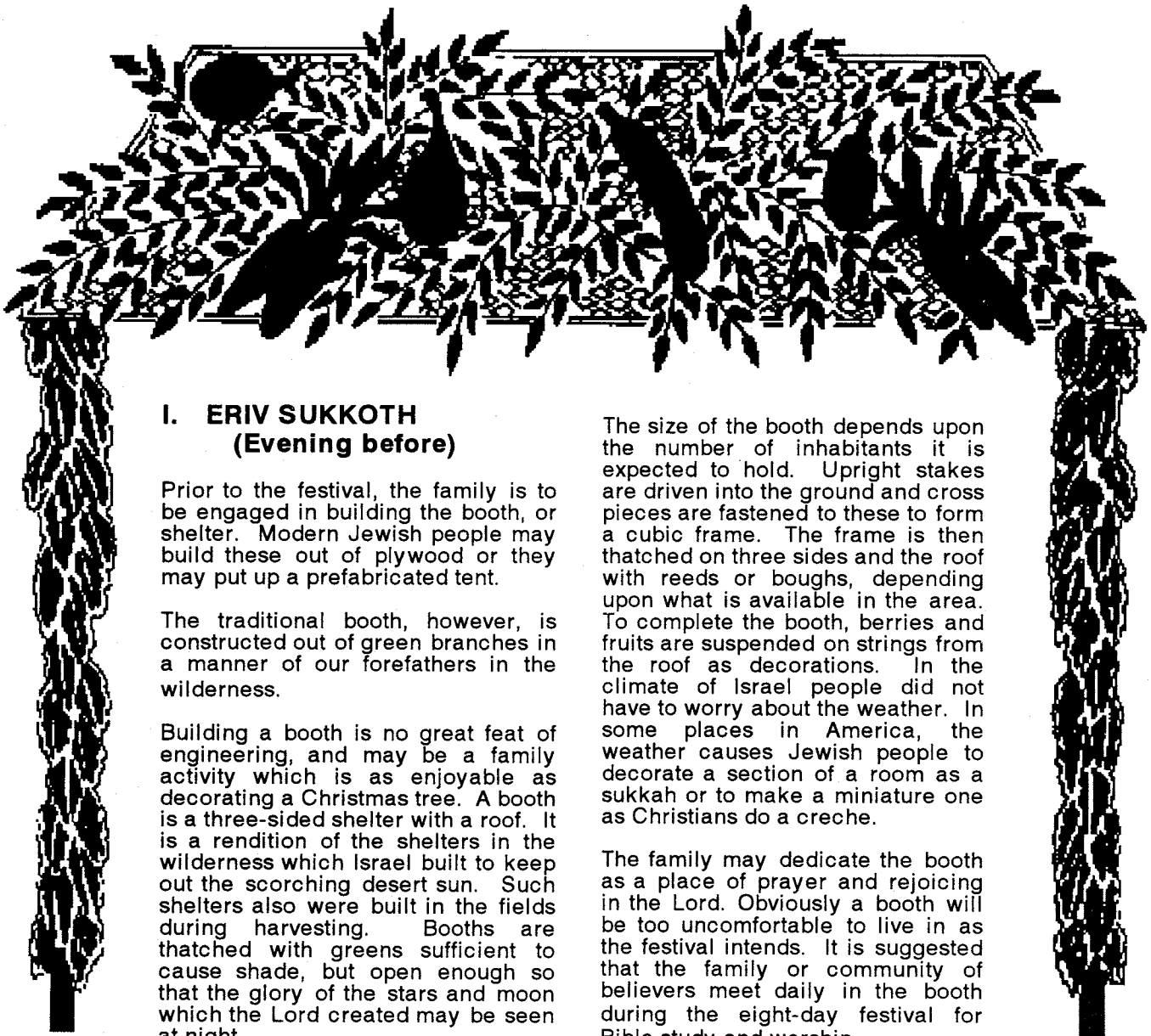
ukkoth (The Feast of Booths, Shelters or Tabernacles) is a week-long fall festival, following Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Originally an agrarian festival celebrating the completion of the harvest, it is also referred to in the Bible as the Feast of Ingathering. The initial intention of the festival was to thank God for the harvest and to pray for the winter rains which were essential for new crops the following years.

A major activity in the celebration of Sukkoth is the building of a small booth called a sukkah. The sukkah (shelter) was a three-sided enclosure erected in the harvesting fields to protect the laborers from the heat of the day. Because it was similar to the tents in which Israel dwelt in the wilderness, the festival took on a spiritual significance as well:

God dwells together with His people in humility. The sukkah was constructed, in accordance with scriptural commands, of leafy branches which caused sufficient protection from the sun by day, yet did not block out the glory of the stars at night.



The festival fell into disuse during the period of the kings, and was revived in the post-exilic days. For this reason, the festival is often considered a relatively late development in the affairs of Israel, appearing mostly in the writings of the prophets and intertestamental times. It was when Israel returned from Babylon, if not earlier, that Sukkoth took on eschatological dimensions. As the Passover was tied to the planting and first fruits, and Shavuoth was a feast of the first ingathering (fulfilled at Pentecost) so the final harvest became anticipatory of the gathering of the faithful in the end time.



I. ERIV SUKKOTH (Evening before)

Prior to the festival, the family is to be engaged in building the booth, or shelter. Modern Jewish people may build these out of plywood or they may put up a prefabricated tent.

The traditional booth, however, is constructed out of green branches in a manner of our forefathers in the wilderness.

Building a booth is no great feat of engineering, and may be a family activity which is as enjoyable as decorating a Christmas tree. A booth is a three-sided shelter with a roof. It is a rendition of the shelters in the wilderness which Israel built to keep out the scorching desert sun. Such shelters also were built in the fields during harvesting. Booths are thatched with greens sufficient to cause shade, but open enough so that the glory of the stars and moon which the Lord created may be seen at night.

The size of the booth depends upon the number of inhabitants it is expected to hold. Upright stakes are driven into the ground and cross pieces are fastened to these to form a cubic frame. The frame is then thatched on three sides and the roof with reeds or boughs, depending upon what is available in the area. To complete the booth, berries and fruits are suspended on strings from the roof as decorations. In the climate of Israel people did not have to worry about the weather. In some places in America, the weather causes Jewish people to decorate a section of a room as a sukkah or to make a miniature one as Christians do a creche.

The family may dedicate the booth as a place of prayer and rejoicing in the Lord. Obviously a booth will be too uncomfortable to live in as the festival intends. It is suggested that the family or community of believers meet daily in the booth during the eight-day festival for Bible study and worship.



II. THE FIRST DAY: The Institution of the Festival

Leviticus 23:33-34 The festival begins on the 15th of Tishrei, and continues the eschatological emphasis of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which took place over the previous two weeks. The solemnity and austerity of the two holy days which spoke of repentance and atonement give way to a joyous time at Sukkoth, which anticipates the heavenly joy which is granted God's people after they have endured earthly tribulation.

Vv. 35, 39b The first day is a day of rest and worship. On this day, the Bible study should be minimal in order to place more emphasis and time on worship.

V. 39a Sukkoth is a harvest festival celebrated after the final ingathering. This is what gives special significance to the anticipation of the eschaton and is a fitting celebration for all those who labor for the Lord. What joy we see in the harvest of souls.

Vv. 41-42 The week-long celebration is like a Sabbath of Sabbaths. As one day a week is set aside during the year as anticipation of the heavenly rest, so one week a year is set aside in anticipation of the heavenly banquet. The family, the dwelling with God, the festive banquet, are all a part of the festival.

V. 43 Perhaps Israel was never so faithful to the Lord as when they blindly followed Him through the wilderness, eating manna, and dwelling in booths. Something was jaded in their later history in Palestine, when they were spoiled by success and comfort. Nehemiah 8 indicates that the festival was neglected from the time of Joshua, son of Nun, up until the return of the exiles from Babylon at which point the humility of Judah was prevalent. The Festival looks back to a simple time when Israel literally waited upon the Lord to open His hand and satisfy their desires.

The Hebrew letter "bet" [ב], is the first letter in the word for house, and the first letter in the opening of Scripture (Gen. 1:1). The letter is nothing but the open shelter standing on a horizontal plain.(1) Even God dwelt in a shelter with His people as the early temple was a tabernacle, or tent. God dwelt in the midst of His people (Ex. 38:9ff). The temporary nature of the booth lends credence to the doctrine that while we are in the world to sojourn, we are not of it to stay. Paul, who

was appropriately enough a tent maker, often referred to the flesh as a tent (*skene*) (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:1).



III. THE SECOND DAY: The Lulav

The Lulav is a cluster of palm branches bound by a golden thread. It is waved as an oriental symbol of welcome. This was the intention of the crowd which flocked to greet Jesus on Palm Sunday. The meaning of "boughs of goodly trees" was interpreted differently by the Pharisees and Sadducees, and at one point an argument erupted. The Sadducees held that the booths were intended to be built of such boughs, while the Pharisees believed the booths to be tents, and the boughs were to be waved as lulavs. The ultimate compromise brought both elements into common practice.

Leviticus 23:40 Following the Pharisees' initiative, the passage "take branches, or boughs, of goodly trees" results in the waving of the lulav. This is to welcome the Lord and His harvest, as well as to welcome the coming of the Kingdom of God at the last times, which is what this festival anticipated.

1 Chronicles 15:25-28 Although not mentioned, we would assume that palm branches would accompany the joyful return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. It was likely that palms were waved to welcome kings to Jerusalem, such as in the procession into the city of Solomon (1 Kings 1:38ff).

Matthew 21:1-10 Jesus is greeted and anointed King as was Solomon. Like David and Solomon, the king of Israel was to be humble, hence the branches reminiscent of Sukkoth humility. Also the donkey, the humble beast of burden who spoke prophetic words of Balaam, is ridden by David and Solomon at their coronations, and also by Jesus in order to fulfill the direct prophecy of Messianic humility in Zech. 9:9.

Psalms 118 "*Baruch ha-ba b'shem Adonai. Hosannah!* (Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord -- save us now!) These words which greeted Jesus in Matt. 21:9 are connected to the greeting of the Savior-King at Rosh Hashanah. Such



rejoicing in the promise of the Messiah is found in Psalm 118. These words of greeting the Saving Lord are in vv. 25-26. We know this is a festival psalm for Sukkoth, not only from tradition, but because improved recent translations have rendered the difficult v. 27: "with branches in your hands, start the festival, march around the altar" (TEV, cf. RSV).

V. 29 quotes the famous thanksgiving processional refrain of Psalm 136.

V. 15 refers to rejoicing in tents.

V. 21-22 proclaim the Lord's Messiah to be Y'shua (salvation) and evoke the popular Messianic theme of the rejected stone becoming the head of the corner.

The conservative Siddur (daily prayer book) points out that in ancient times Psalm 118:25 was repeated over and over in joyful procession around the altar on each of the six days of Sukkoth. On the seventh day, seven such processions were formed, thus the name "*Hoshana Rabba*," or "Great Hosanna," denoted this day. In the later times, prayers based on Scripture and midrash were composed, chiefly by the Eighth Century A.D. rabbi, Elazar ha-Kallir. The responsive refrain in these prayers is "Save us now, Our God" (*Elohaynoo hoshana*). (2)

The "Hoshanoth," as these prayers are called, are heavily messianic in overtone. They call for Israel to turn and be saved, and speak of righteousness and peace as the hallmarks of the Messiah.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 One of the Hoshanoth is based on this passage in which Messiah's advent is imminent. He will be called "Branch" and His attributes include Davidic lineage, righteousness, wisdom and justice. In His day, Judah will be saved. "The Lord is our righteousness" completes the thought of Yom Kippur, where the Lord Himself must provide the sufficient atoning sacrifice for our unrighteousness.



IV. THE THIRD DAY: The Ascent of the King

1 Kings 1:38-48 The coronation of Solomon as David's successor is consistent with the other messianic images of the rejected stone being the head of the corner, the last being first, and the weaker triumphing over the stronger. Solomon was the youngest son of David and not legally in line of succession over Adonijah. Nevertheless a switch reminiscent of Jacob and Esau takes place. In addition, Solomon is a child of the sinful marriage of David to Bathsheba, which would be further grounds for his disqualification as king.

V. 38a sets up a pattern of ascent to the throne from outside Jerusalem on a mule which, we noted above, Jesus duplicated on Palm Sunday. The Spring of Gihon was the source of the Kidron, which ran through the valley between Zion and Olivet. Since the Kidron supplied the pool of Siloam (a reservoir) via a tunnel under the wall of Jerusalem, the Spring of Gihon was traced as the source of the life-giving water for the city. (Cf. healing miracles at Siloam, John 9:7.) The spring, or fountain at Gihon is consistent with the image of the fountain of living waters which Jesus alluded to in His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:14). Desert peoples have no trouble connecting fresh (living, running) water with life-giving qualities, so they named this all-important spring "Gihon" after one of the rivers in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:13).

V. 39 Solomon's coronation was in itself a re-enactment of a popular Rosh Hashanah observance, where tradition tells us David had represented a sort of "vegetation god" at a dawning of a new year entering the city to the blasts of *shofarim* (trumpets) from the direction of the Mount of Olives, mounted on his mule. The local folklore around Jerusalem saw the King retreating to the Mount of Olives outside the city, barefoot and in mourning for the dead vegetation of the past year. The mythological gate to the underworld (Sheol) was under the Mount of Olives. At the rising of the sun on the day of the New Year, the king would return from Olivet as victorious lord over death. He would process into Jerusalem acting the part of the sun, proclaiming the birth of a new year and the hope of another growing season to come.(3)

This anticipation of the death and resurrection of the Messiah testified to by the latter prophets can be seen specifically in Zech. 14:4, where the Mount of Olives was said to split in two at the dawning of Messiah's reign. Many rabbis believed that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem in humble victory over Sheol in the new age (Cf. faith to move mountains, rending of the temple veil).

Such a journey through Olivet and back was taken by David during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-20) when he retreated in mourning and returned to Jerusalem in victory, even though victory meant the death of his beloved son, Absalom. The route of Jesus on Palm Sunday would have been the road from Bethany, across the Mount of Olives into the Kidron Valley.

The dawning of a new day is celebrated in a daybreak liturgy during each day of Sukkoth. All the celebrants turned from facing east to facing west and chanted: "Our fathers, when they were in this place turned with their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord." *Sukkah* 5:4.(4) (Cf. Ez. 8:16). This shows a replacement of ancient sun worship with the worship of the true God. No doubt the Messiah would also replace the king, His ancestor, as true God at the end of time.

Psalm 47 Though not one of the songs of ascent which the Levites sang during this festival (Psalm 120-134), this psalm certainly reflects the jubilant enthronement of the Lord as King. It is ascribed in the

Hebrew to the sons of Korah, who were guards of the temple gates both in pre- and post-exilic times (1 Chron. 9:19). It would be through their gates that the royal processions of both festival and coronative would have passed.

Vv. 5-7 The eschatological trumpets and shouts of joy proclaim the Lord who is King.

V. 8 God's rule is universal -- He is greater than Israel's Levitical priesthood (Psalm 110, Hebrews 4-7).

V. 9 The sign of the day of the Lord which Sukkoth anticipates is the time when all nations will assemble with Israel to acknowledge the Lord as King of the Universe. We will explore this theme on the seventh day of Sukkoth.

Zechariah 14:16-18 The survivors of the attackers of Jerusalem in the end time will fulfill Psalm 47:9, by joining Israel and worshipping at the celebration of Sukkoth when the Lord is acclaimed by all nations as King. All who join Israel in this way will be blessed as those who do not will be cursed.

Now in the messianic age, people of all nations who receive Jesus as their Messiah and pray for new life and His lordship over them are indeed gathering with their faithful people of Abraham to celebrate the final harvest. As we anticipate this ingathering, we pray the Lord of the harvest to send us and many laborers into the ripening fields. We will look again at this passage which is so central to the understanding of the eschatological character of the Feast of Booths.



V. THE FOURTH DAY: Living Water, Part 1

As previously stated, water was seen as the substance of life in the dry places of Palestine. Not all water was fit to drink, but only "living water," or running water; flowing water was safe to consume. Living water was the gift of life itself and health. When Elisha turned brackish water into drinking water, the waters were said to be "made whole" or "healed" (2 Kings 2:22). The Hebrew verb used here (רפח=raphah) was also used for restoring fertility, sexual potency, healing of the sick, restoration of a king to power after deposition, and raising the dead. The pool of Bethesda

(John 5:1ff) was said to be healing when its waters became stirred up, or moved: a connection to this concept of "living waters."

The spring at Gihon, the source of Jerusalem's water supply was the place of coronation of kings, as was already discussed (1 Kings 1:33). The king began where the life of the city began. Oil was poured out on him where living water was poured out of the ground for Judah.

Exodus 15:22-25 Good drinking water was a natural source of concern for Israel while wandering in the desert wilderness. No sooner had they crossed the Red Sea by God's hand of miracles; no sooner had they sung the Song of Moses in triumph over the Egyptians, than they faced this first great problem of the wilderness: nothing to drink. It is interesting to note that John tells us that Jesus' first great miracle after His baptism was giving wine to the celebrants at Cana to drink. When the Israelites finally found water at Marah, it was too bitter to drink. Moses prays for God's power to turn the bitter water sweet, even as Jesus at Cana turned the water even sweeter: into wine.

V. 26 The sweetness of the good water is a metaphor for the sweetness of willing obedience to God in contrast to the slavery of Israel's recent history. The Lord vows to preserve Israel from the diseases of the Egyptians if they remain obedient. In this connection, the Lord says He is Israel's healer (**רִפְיָהוּ**). This miracle is similar to the one alluded to above in 2 Kings 19:ff, where Elisha prophesies that God "healed" (**רִפְיָהוּ**) the brackish waters of Jericho which were producing death and miscarriages. Interestingly, this was also Elisha's first miracle after he was anointed by Elijah.

V. 27 The result of the promise of health to the obedient is that God leads Israel to Elim where there is an oasis of twelve fresh springs. They camp there by the refreshing living waters.

Exodus 17:1-7 The tests grew harder in the wilderness. At Rephidim (perhaps a cognate of **רִפְיָהוּ**) there was not even bad water to turn into good -- there was nothing. The people's complaints should have caused the Lord to punish them as they were not showing obedience to the covenant at Marah. Nevertheless, the grace of God took pity on them (for they were thirsty) and provided living water from a rock.

1 Corinthians 10:1-5 v.4 Paul says that the water-giving rock was a spiritual rock which went along with Israel throughout their wilderness wanderings. The image of a rock is one of dependability and changelessness. But a rock is also not alive. This fact is counteracted by the living water gushing out of the rock to heal the people's parched throats. Paul says that this marvelous image of a changeless, yet living rock is a metaphor for Christ. The fact that God acted in grace to refresh His people in the midst of their complaints and tests of the Lord's patience is consistent with the eternal presence of the Messiah who saves sinners while they were yet sinners.

V. 2 Paul compares our baptism into Jesus to the Red Sea experience where people were baptized into Moses. For better or for worse, the people went with Moses through the sea and they were bound to follow him in the wilderness. We may also have complaints on our journey through this worldly wilderness, yet we have come through the water with Jesus, our Redeemer, and we have committed ourselves to following Him with no possibility of turning back to Egyptian slavery.

In going through the waters, we see an image of death and resurrection. Without water, we die. Yet in the water we drown unless we follow God's Servant.

As the people pray for rain at Sukkoth, it is in realization that water is a life or death issue. As the winter rains produced a new spring crop, so the waters of baptism become like the Red Sea; a gate to new life and spiritual healing -- revival to those who follow Messiah.



VI. THE FIFTH DAY: Living Water, Part 2

Ezekiel 47:1-12 This vision of Ezekiel portrays the eschatological event of Jerusalem reviving the desert. The new life comes in the form of rivers of living water which flow from the temple. The popular rabbinic teaching was that on the day of the Lord the rock under the altar on Mount Zion would split and water would gush out, forming rivers to flow in the desert, bringing new life to the desolate areas.

Revelation 22:1 tells of such a river of living water issuing from the throne of God in the temple of the New Jerusalem. We also observe that Jesus' death was accompanied by the splitting of rocks (Matt. 27:51), even as Zech. 14:4 foretells a splitting of Olivet prior to the issuance of the rivers from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8ff).

This eschatological picture is related to the water from the rock in Moses' time. This water from rocks in the desert has always been a popular theme for Israel, recounted many times, especially in the times of suffering and deprivation. In retelling this wilderness event, the water was likewise said to "gush out" of the rock and form rivers in the desert. (cf. Isaiah 48:21, Psalm 78:15-16, Psalm 115:41, Psalm 114:8)

The river that flows from the temple is anticipated by a water libation poured out on the altar each day of the Sukkoth festival. At the same time, there was a wine libation. The water was drawn from the pool at Siloam, Jerusalem's reservoir supplied by Ghion spring via the Kidron, and carried up through the gates of the temple (guarded by the sons of Korah) to songs of Hosannah and the waving of the lulav, much like the entrance of the king.(5)

The pouring out of the water and the wine in anticipation of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh as a witness of the Kingdom's coming was identified by St. John (1 John 5:6-11). (Jesus' miracle of water into wine in John 2:1-11, and the water mingled with blood from Jesus' side [John 19:34], are also consistent with this image, as are the two sacraments.)

The rivers in Ezekiel, like the outpouring of the spirit, start in Jerusalem with the Messiah (libation), and follow to the surrounding area first, and then in all directions into the world (Cf. Acts 1:8).

The farther from Jerusalem the rivers flow, the deeper they get, much like the multiplication of believers after Pentecost. New life, green trees, resting places for men and animals, shall spring up in the desert of the world. Even the Dead Sea, the most desolate of places, will become fresh (like the waters of Marah) and team with fish. V. 9 says everywhere the river flows there will be living, fresh water and new and abundant life.

The anticipation of these rivers in the festival celebration is seen in a complicated set of pipes which channeled the libation water and wine from the altar basin out to the Brook Kidron where it would be carried out into the desert.(6)

V. 12 The rivers of living water will not only produce new life, but eternal life. The trees will not wither nor leaves fall, and there will be fruit in every month because of the waters that flow from the sanctuary. The fruit will be for food, and the leaves for *healing*, just as the waters from the rock were connected to the promise of manna and healing in Exodus 15.

Zechariah 14:8-11 This is a reiteration of the Ezekiel 47 prophecy. V. 4 speaks of the final Rosh Hashanah when Olivet will split to reveal the door to eternal life, and immediately thereafter the great Sukkoth festival will begin, pouring out like rivers from the heart of Jerusalem.

Zechariah 13:1-2 Like baptism, the fountain of living water in Jerusalem not only gives new life to the nations, but also cleanses God's people from their sins.

John 4:7-14 Jesus' dialogue with the woman at the well uses living water as a theme. Living water, here, is the new life in the Messiah which quenches spiritual thirst once and for all.

V. 14 Jesus evokes the popular Sukkoth image of a spring of living water welling up into a fountain of eternal life. This spring not only comes from the Messiah, but here we see that Messiah's followers will find such a wonderful spring inside of themselves. Obviously Jesus is using the spring of living water to denote the Holy Spirit which He places within His people. As the river broadens and deepens as it flows farther from Jerusalem, so the Samaritan woman immediately witnesses to her neighbors and there is a multiplication of believers.

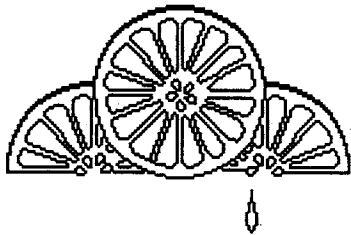
John 7:1-39 Here Jesus actually attends the Festival of Booths in Jerusalem.

V. 37 At the time of the final water libation on Hoshana Rabba, Jesus stands up and proclaims Himself to be the living water. He refers to the scripture and says that the fulfillment of the "rivers" prophecies of Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14 will be found among the believers in Jesus. We see now that the waters flowing from the altar and the throne of God are continuing to flow through the people of the New Jerusalem.

V. 39 This is a commentary on Jesus' words which confirms what we have already suspected throughout this study, viz. the rivers of living water are a metaphor for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter days. Acts 2 is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the world being revived by the Spirit which issues from Mount Zion and snowballs as it proceeds into the uttermost parts of the earth. The joy of the believers who received the spirit of ministry in the Messianic age is foretold in Is. 12:3: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

Isaiah 44:3-4 The connection of Water and the Spirit confirms John's statement in 7:39

Isaiah 55:1 The suffering servant's words: "everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" in the LXX are nearly quoted by Jesus in John 7:37: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."



VII. THE SIXTH DAY: The Ethrog. The Eschatological Significance of Ingathering

Besides the waving of the lulav, every celebrant at Sukkoth carried the "*ethrog*," or citrus fruit. The booths were also decorated with fresh fruits. This was symbolic of the fruit of the promised land.(7)

Spiritually, the fruit of the promised land is the eternal rest in heaven. As we have

already seen, Sukkoth not only is the ingathering of what has been sown, but it is the beginning of the final effort to inundate the world with Messiah's life-giving Spirit. Not only does the Spirit *flow out* of Jerusalem into the world, but the nations are *drawn in* to celebrate Tabernacles with Messiah forever. Jesus also speaks of His "lifting up" as an event that "will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32).

Isaiah 2:2-4 In the later days, Zion shall become the universal focus of God's life-giving word. As the word goes out of Zion, much like the rivers, so the people of all the earth are drawn to the mountain of the Lord, where they shall find lasting peace.

Isaiah 12:4-5 The sequel to the "wells of salvation" passage says on the day of the Lord, His word and deeds will be made know among the nations. The praises of God's people will make the Lord's glory known in all the earth.

Zechariah 12 On the last day Jerusalem will become a focus of the battle of the world against God's kingdom. As above, where nations were drawn to Jerusalem to learn the paths of God and to obtain peace, here evil nations are drawn to Jerusalem for war and judgment. Wheat and chaff alike are gathered in on Mount Zion for separation. For the enemies of the Kingdom, Jerusalem becomes a "cup of reeling" (v. 2), "a heavy stone" (v. 3), "a blazing pot... a flaming torch among the sheaves" (v. 6).

V. 10 God says He will "pour out" the spirit of compassion and prayer on Judah (the spiritual intentions of the Sukkoth libations) so that they also will weep over their piercing of their Messiah, the first-born of God. The victory of the Lord over the evil nations will not be a time of gloating for Israel, but rather a time of reflection upon her own sins. Seeing the action of God against His enemies makes for a time of realization: we too have often behaved as God's enemies. This, of course, was the point of preceding Sukkoth with the Day of Atonement. V. 13:1 likewise shows the result of this spirit of repentance; the Sukkoth fountain cleanses Jerusalem.

Revelation 7:9-17 This passage is an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, which is appropriate on this eve of the seventh day of Sukkoth. A great crown from *every nation* gathers in

the City of God, waving *palm branches* and crying "Salvation belongs to our God" (Hosannah). They are there to praise God.

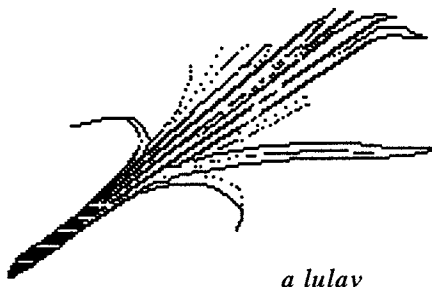
Vv. 13-14 One of the elders explains that this multitude is the throng of faithful who have come through the tribulation. They are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (Cf. water and wine libation). They serve God constantly; eternally (v. 15).

The Lord is their *shelter*.⁽⁸⁾ The tent or booth in the New Testament really is the equivalent of the sukkah of the Old. The sukkah (tent) is a sign of God's protective and glorious presence among His people. It seems less inappropriate in this context that Peter wanted to build three booths (*skenas*) for Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the mountain of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:4). It was a fitting thing to do for God manifested in the flesh as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

Another eschatological reference to the tent is in Luke 16:9, where Jesus directs us to the heavenly "tent" when worldly wealth gives out.

Revelation 7:17 The Lamb becomes the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23, only here "still waters" are replaced by "springs of living waters." Certainly this passage is the culmination of all the Sukkoth imagery in Zechariah 14.

Amos 9:11-13 This prophecy of the restoration of the Kingdom is quoted by James in Acts 15:16-18. The tent of David will be restored (LXX). V. 13 The grain will grow faster than it can be harvested; grapes will grow faster than they can be made into wine. When the Spirit of God is poured out on His people, all the world will become ripe for harvest and God's Israel will be restored. The abundant blessing of God will pour from the resurrected tent of David.



a lulav

VIII. HOSHANA RABBA: The Branch, The Light

This is the day of the "Great Hosanna." The libation made on this day was accompanied by the blowing of the shofar and the circumambulation of the altar, reciting the Hallel Psalms (113-118). The final psalm, 118, had special Sukkoth imagery as we have seen above. It was at this time that Jesus said "If any man thirst, let him come to me" (John 7:38).

On this last day of the festival, a custom of striking the *Arba'ah* (willow branch) took place. A lulav of willow branches was struck on the ground three times in an effort to shed all the leaves, which represented sins.⁽⁹⁾ Just prior to this were the special Messianic prayers. The Messiah would be one who would cause the shedding of sins in His people. The prayer reflects a trust in Messiah for eternal life and identifies Him as a "branch" of David. A study of the branch will include the following:

Isalah 11:1-12 V. 1 The branch of the Messiah comes from Jesse's roots. That which was cut off will rise again.

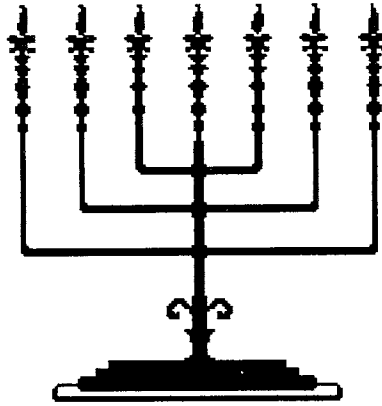
Vv. 2-4a The qualities of the Messiah are outlined.

V. 4b The smiting of the earth with the Lord's breath is reminiscent of the striking of the ground with the *arba'ah*.

Vv. 5-9 Righteousness and peace are the two cardinal signs of the Messiah. The peace between natural enemies is the theme of nations gathering in peace at Zion on the last day (Zech. 14:16).

Vv. 10-12 The ingathering of the nations under the ensign of the Messiah in Judah is discussed. The dispersed of Israel will be gathered.

Isalah 60:21 identifies the new Israel herself as the "branch" of righteousness. This identification of the branch of David with his people is made by Jesus in John. The other great event of Hoshana Rabba in the evening was that the pilgrims came to the temple with torches and candles. Four large menorahs were also lit in the temple (15:1-11). The context of the "vine and the branches" image is Jesus' promise to pour out the Holy Spirit on His disciples so they may continue His messianic work on the earth (John 14) so that the entire building was aglow with splendid light. This light became the focus of Israel's worship in



anticipation of He who would come as the light of the world.

John 8:12 Jesus proclaims Himself the Light of the World in the same way that He spoke of "living water" in 7:37. Since most scholars believe that vv. 7:53-8:11 are out of place and these verses are placed elsewhere by some manuscripts, this would make the statement "I am the Light of the World" follow immediately the "living water" discourse. The context of this statement would then be the lighting of the temple on Hoshana Rabba. Jesus saw this lighting of the temple as a messianic prophecy. Other "light" passages of note are Matt. 5:14-16, John 1:1-9 and 1 John 1:5-10.

Luke 2:32 This portion of the *Nunc Dimittis* is where Simeon ascribes to the infant Jesus the twofold purpose of the lighting of the temple on Hoshana Rabba:

- 1) light to reveal God's truth to the nations and draw them to the city of God,
- 2) light to glorify the faithful of Israel.



IX. SHEMINI ATZERETH: Solemn Deliverance

The eighth day of Sukkoth is the Day of Solemn Deliverance (Shemini Atzereth). This is the day on which prayers for rain and for good crops in the coming year are

traditionally said. The prayer for rain reflects the faith of the community that the God who has brought them through a successful harvest will continue to care for them in the future.

The eschatological significance of this day is not only significant for the people of Israel, but for the nations gathered around her. The rain, symbolizing spiritual refreshment and new life, will fall on Israel, and spill over onto all the nations who are willing to celebrate with her.

Ruth 4:13-17a Here is the outcome of the story of Ruth. Though she was from Moab, her love for the Jewish people and willingness to receive their God as her own (Ruth 1:16) has put her in a position to receive God's grace. Now the blessing of Judah is visited on Ruth, and she bears a son who is to be the ancestor of the Messiah. Moreover, she who has cared for Naomi, her Jewish mother-in-law, will now be well taken care of for the rest of her days. The rain of God has made someone in Moab fertile.

Zechariah 14:10 As we have seen before, Jerusalem is at once the place of outpouring, and the place of ingathering (contrasting opposites are a favorite Semitic poetic device). Jerusalem remains aloft when all the land becomes a plain. The survivors of the last battle will be converted so that Sukkoth will become an international festival. For those who desire the fresh rain of God's Spirit and rivers of living water pouring from their hearts, it would seem important to keep the Feast of Tabernacles with Jerusalem in anticipation of the time that Jesus will gather all faithful nations together with a penitent Judah to proclaim absolutely everything as "holy to the Lord" (v. 20).

**X. SIMCHAT TORAH:
Rejoicing in the Law**

The day after the week of Sukkoth is a festival day in its own right. Called Simchat Torah, it is a day to rejoice in the law. For believers in the Gospel of Jesus, the Law does not always seem like a positive thing. It is conceded that the Law is a guide and mirror and rule by which God's people may lead more pleasing lives for Him, yet from the writings of Paul and elsewhere we know that the Law is no savior. With Luther's words "*Lex semper accusat*" ringing in our ears, it is difficult for us to conceive of such a thing as "rejoicing in the Law."

For the Old Testament community, however, the Law was more than something to keep; a means to please God; a good way to live. The Law was given to them as a gift from God which set them apart from the nations and reflected the love of the Almighty who cared for His people enough to reveal His will and good pleasure to them.

On Simchat Torah, the last chapters of the Torah are read. This included the Song of Moses (Deut. 32) in which God is praised for the great work of deliverance He had performed for His people, and praised all the more for His future promises. Then the

scrolls are taken out of the tabernacle and the congregation processed around the sanctuary with them seven times. Some of the more orthodox have been known to dance with the scrolls to indicate the love and respect they have for God's word.

Psalm 1:2-3 The Law is more than duty; it is delight. Those who meditate on God's word become the fulfillment of Sukkoth promise: a fruitful tree planted by streams of water. Here, as throughout Psalm 119, the Law takes on a messianic character, where it is a means to know God as well as to obey Him.

Matthew 5:17-18 When Messiah Jesus came into the world, indeed He did not come to circumvent the Law, but to fulfill it. The condemnation of the Law, falling on Him, our substitute, satisfied its accusing nature. Now, the rejoicing in God's self-revelation of the Law, portrayed in Simchat Torah, is all the greater because we have beheld God's salvific nature through the revelation of the Messiah.



" Simchat Torah"

"Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise His name with dancing and make music to Him with tambourine and harp. For the Lord takes delight in His people; he crowns the humble with salvation" (Psalm 149:2-4).



FOOTNOTES ON SUKKOTH

1. Siegel, Richard et al, *The First Jewish Catalogue*, Philadelphia, 1973. p.189
2. Birnbaum, Philip, trans. *Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem*, New York, 1949, 1977. p. 680, footnote.
3. Buttrick, George A., ed. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Nashville, 1962. Volume 3, p. 545.
4. *ibid.* Volume 1, p. 456.
5. Buksbazen, Victor. *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*. Ft. Washington Pa, 1954. p. 51.

6. *ibid.* p. 49.

7. *ibid.* p. 47.

8. The Septuagint [LXX] is the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament. It translates "Feast of booths", Zech. 14:19 as *skenopegia* (σκηνοπηγία). This is significant because it connects the Hebrew word for booth, sukkah, with the Green New Testament usage of the word Tent, (σκηνή) used by Peter on Transfiguration (Matt. 17:4), and Paul as a symbol of the temporary nature of the flesh (2 Cor. 5:1-4) and elsewhere: 2 Peter 1:13-14, Rev. 21:3 and Acts 15:16.

9. Buksbazen. p. 52-53.



Chapter 6. HANUKKAH

Introduction

Hanukkah is numbered among the minor festivals of Judaism, because it is not one of the five great annual observances commanded in the Torah. While the historical roots of Hanukkah are found in much later, intertestamental times, it occupies a place of prominence in the Jewish consciousness today which is second only to Passover. While detractors of the importance of Hanukkah have suggested that it rose to prominence because it falls coincidentally with the Church's celebration of Christmas, it must be pointed out that the celebration of Hanukkah was well established by Jesus' time, and that Our Lord Himself observed the festival (John 10:22-3). John not only tells us that Jesus was teaching in the Temple in Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication, but adds that it was winter.

The Feast of Dedication is another name for Hanukkah. In 165 B.C. Judas Maccabeus freed the Jewish nation from the oppression of the Syrians and cleansed and rededicated the temple which they had defiled. The word "Hanukkah" refers to the "Festival of Lights," commemorating the miracle when the menorah, or lampstand in the Temple, burned for eight days on one day's supply of oil, until more oil could be obtained.

The popular celebration of Hanukkah involves nightly meditations around the menorah. Each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, beginning on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev (November-December), another candle is lighted, until all eight are glowing in remembrance of the bravery and martyrdom of the Jews in Maccabean times and the miracle of the oil. While the standard lampstand of Judaism contains seven candles, special Hanukkah menorahs have nine. One candle is for each night of the festival, and one, called the "Servant," is lit first, and is used to light the others on successive nights. Messianic believers commonly hold that this "Servant" candle stands for Jesus, who is the Light of the World, and gives His light to each believer.

The Hanukkah text is contained in 1 and 2 Maccabees, two of the 13 books of the Old Testament Apocrypha. While these books never were a part of the Jewish cannon (they were written in Greek and their authorship was in question), they serve to provide an historical background during the intertestamental period from the point of view of God's faithful people. A summary of the historical setting of Hannukah is given in Appendix F.

What follows is Bible study material adapted from a manuscript written by Kearney L. Frantsen, a Lutheran pastor directing the Jewish outreach mission, Good News for Israel, in Minneapolis, Minn. The manuscript was originally commissioned by the LCMS Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People in 1984, and was published by Synod's Board for Evangelism Services as a part of the "Feasts of Israel" Bible Study series.

I. FIRST EVENING: Religious Freedom

1 Maccabees 1:1-61 *"Then the king (Antiochus Epiphanes) wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that each should give up his customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath"* (vv. 41-3).

The Jewish people faced a great crisis in 168 B.C. From without and from within there was heavy pressure on them to give up their true worship of God. From without it was the evil king and his decree that any Jew who followed the Bible would be found guilty and receive the death penalty. From within, many Jewish leaders had fallen from God's ways and tried to lead the people away into idol worship.

The question was this: would the Jewish people compromise their faith and lose their relationship with their God and subsequently forfeit their mission to be a light to the nations? If they ended up no different from any other people, God couldn't use them to bring His Son into the world later on as Messiah. The Jews, then, were threatened with being eliminated as people God could use.

Religious freedom was their heritage. Would they lose it? Satan was trying once again, as he had under Pharaoh and Haman, to destroy them because he feared the promised Messiah to come from them. Stop reading the Bible? Not circumcise their baby boys? Quit celebrating the sabbath and religious festivals? For the heroes of Hanukkah, these were no options.

Deuteronomy 6:4-15. V. 4 is indelibly impressed upon the heart of every faithful Jewish person. It is called the "*Sh'ma*," from the first word of the verse "hear." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The only true God created all things, and called the Jewish people to serve Him and be available to Him in bringing His redemption to all peoples.

V. 5 instructs God's people to love Him totally. This is the first great commandment. Jesus knew it, followed it, and taught it (Matt. 22:37-38).

V. 6-9 The children were to be taught to know and love the true God.

V. 10-15 God knew the people would be tempted to forget and forsake Him once they were prosperous in the Land He gave them. He warned them to be careful. They were freed from bondage in Egypt. Now they were not to compromise, but to live in the freedom He gave them. V. 13 is the one Jesus quoted when tempted to worship Satan: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Matt. 4:10).



II. SECOND EVENING: Suffering

1 Maccabees 1:62-2:14 *"But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die."* (vv. 62-3) (See also 2 Maccabees 6:18-31).

2 Maccabees 7:1-42 *"I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our fathers, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by afflictions and plagues to make you confess that He alone is God"* (v. 37).

Great gloom and darkness covered Israel. Those who loved God mourned for their fellow countrymen who compromised and obeyed man rather than God. They grieved in their minds and hearts because they saw that God had to punish them for their great wickedness. They paid often times with their lives when they resisted the enemy. Those who courageously died were an example to their fellow Jews and also to us today, that believers can be faithful even unto death. Their witness is that there are worse things than death.

The story of 2 Maccabees 7 includes seven sons of one mother, Hannah, who all died for their faith in the true God. They knew they would live again in heaven. They knew they were giving their lives to uphold the truth. Their suffering and death was very precious to God (*cf.* Ps. 116:15).

Acts 7:51-60 The death of Hannah's sons and many other faithful people in the Maccabean era was echoed by the martyrs of the early church; among them was Stephen. The word "martyr" comes

from the Greek word for "witness." It was the bold witness of God's message that caused the death of Stephen, and it was his death which underscored the importance of the message. Stephen bravely told the proud leaders of his people exactly what the problem was: they had resisted the Holy Spirit, who points sinners to Jesus the Messiah (cf. John 16:7-14). He was willing to die rather than to deny the love and saving grace of his Lord.

V. 54. The natural man is offended at the truth about Jesus. He rages within himself, and lashes out with murderous fury at those who witness the truth to them. We continue to see this is horrible bondage in our world today.

God strengthened and emboldened Stephen at the point of his martyrdom by giving him a vision of heaven (vv. 55-6). The vision put all life and death into perspective for Stephen, and he died as Jesus had: with forgiveness for his murderers on his lips and the peaceful countenance of an angel.



III. THIRD EVENING: Deliverance

1 Maccabees 2:1-4:35. *"Judas Maccabeus has been a mighty warrior from his youth; he shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples" (2:66). "How can we, few as we are, fight against so great and strong a multitude? ...It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven" (3:17, 19).*

While the great persecution of the faithful Jews was going on, many died, many fled and many hid. The persecution started in Jerusalem and spread out to the villages of Judea. The soldiers of King Antiochus Epiphanes would erect an altar in each village square and then demand that all the people take part in sacrificing a pig.

Vv. 2:1-28. In the village of Modein, a priest named Mattathias and his five sons started the fight for freedom. God honored their strong faith and raised them up to spearhead the resistance against the godless Hellenists.⁽¹⁾ Tradition tells us the king's officer, Apelles, together with his men and one Jew who stepped forward

to offer the blasphemous sacrifice were struck dead.

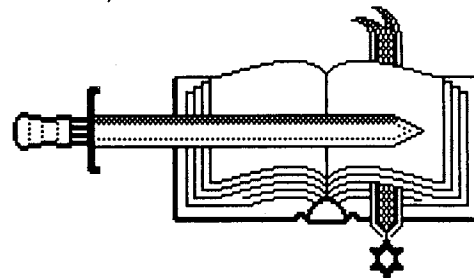
Vv. 2:29-41 Mattathias made an important and necessary decision: from then on they would resist attacks against them, even on the sabbath, though they would never initiate an attack on the sabbath. Mattathias would probably have agreed with Jesus when he said "the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28).

Vv. 2:51-60. Mattathias also lifted up the heroes of faith in Jewish history of examples of courage. He concludes with the great truth, "None who put their trust in God will lack strength."

Vv. 3:46-60 is an enlightening passage showing how they prepared for battle. They fasted, read Scripture, prayed and received exhortation. Is not this how we are encouraged in the New Testament to wage war against the attacks of Satan and his legion?

Ephesians 6:10-20 Our Lord is strong, and we can know the truth the Maccabees knew, that we who believe can stand victorious against the enemies we face. Our Lord rose victorious from the grave and lives to help us now. He says, "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Paul also said (Rom. 8:37) that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Vv. 12-18 tell us that we have a strong enemy in Satan. He attacks us from without through the world and from within through our sinful nature. But by faith we can effectively use God's armor and weapons against these attacks. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word are all found in Jesus Himself. Add prayer, alertness and perseverance and the victory is ours, just as it was for our Maccabean friends. We can joyfully and confidently echo Paul when he says, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).



IV. FOURTH EVENING: Dedication

1 Maccabees 4:36-59 *"Then said Judas and his brothers, 'Behold, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it'" (v. 4:36). "Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev" (v. 4:59).*

The temple had been horribly profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes. This may be considered the first fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the abomination that makes desolate (Dan. 9:27). Later on, Jesus was to refer to another fulfillment of this yet to come (Matt. 24:15).

It is hard for us to imagine how utterly corrupt and unclean the sacrificing of swine flesh and blood on God's altar actually was. Yet it was precisely because this, along with rededicating the Temple in honor of Zeus, was known to be the ultimate blasphemy in Israel, that Antiochus went out of his way to perform these acts. This Satanic entrance into God's Temple caused it to become totally unholy. The Shekinah Glory of God's awesome presence was gone. Moreover, the Jews grieved because they knew that it was in part their own unfaithfulness that had caused the departure of God's holiness from their midst.

What a glorious day it was when the battles were won and the way was opened to return to Jerusalem and Mount Zion to cleanse the Temple, rebuild its altar and rededicate them once again to their Holy God.

John 2:13-22 Jesus also had zeal for the house of the Lord (*cf.* Psalm 69:9). He came with righteous indignation and great authority to literally sweep the temple courts clean of the greedy and dishonest money-changers who had set up shop there. But Jesus saw the physical building as only a representation of His body; the true dwelling place of the Spirit of God. That is the same Spirit that He pours out onto each of us, so that we become temples wherein God dwells as well (1 Cor. 6:19). We also know the ravages of temple desecration as we struggle with attacks from the world and temptations within. Jesus is Emanuel; God with us to call and cleanse and consecrate all who

would come to Him in repentance and faith.

Proverbs 22:6 The Hebrew word *Hanak* (*cf.* Hanukkah) is used here to mean "train-up." The basic meaning of the word, consecrate or dedicate, is colored by the connotation of discipline and training. Indeed we must present ourselves before the Lord each day in a disciplined way, asking the Lord to cleanse us from our sin and to create in us a new and right Spirit.



V. FIFTH EVENING: Worship

1 Maccabees 4:52-58 *"At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, the Temple was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. All the people fell on their faces and worshipped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them" (Vv. 4:54-55).*

The relief was tremendous. The nightmare of the desolating abominations was finally over. The truly dedicated Jewish people, who had now cleansed and rededicated the Temple and altar, exploded in praise and adoration to their great, loving and powerful God. The Talmud (Shabbath 21b) instructs that the Hallel, or praise psalms (113-118), which are recited at the main festivals, were to be read at Hanukkah every year thereafter.

Genuine worship was a very natural response to a very real deliverance. They had literally been brought back from spiritual catastrophe and near obliteration. They did not have to be told or scolded to worship God. The reality of their new situation brought forth the reality of heart-felt worship. The word "worship" literally means "worthship," and this was uppermost in their hearts and minds: Our God is worthy of our highest praise!

Ezra 3:10-13 Once before the Temple had been destroyed and rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Those who returned after the Babylonian captivity began to rebuild, spurred on by the praises of the Priests. The din of music and praise rang out through the countryside, so that it even became a witness to Judah's neighbors (v.13). The entire building was erected amidst the praises of God's people, and became in a very real sense a

vessel of praise. We, who are also God's temples, must continue in this same mode of heart-felt praise. We should praise the Lord because He is great; because of all He has done for us; indeed because He is God and greatly to be praised.

Each time we lift up the name of the Lord in praise, we lift up ourselves above the trials and changes of life as those who are redeemed by God and destined for eternity with Him. Each time we give joyful praise to our God, we give testimony to the world around us that God is in His temple: He dwells amid the praises of His people (cf. Psalm 22:3).



VI. SIXTH EVENING: The Sign

1 Maccabees 4:56 *"So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and offered burnt offerings with gladness; they offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise."*

Talmud Sabbath 21b *"What is the reason for Hanukkah? Our Rabbis taught: on the 25th of Kislev commence the days of Hanukkah, which are eight, on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit the lamp therewith for eight days. The following year these days were appointed a Festival with the recital of Hallel and thanksgiving."*

After the second temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. the Pharisees gained the upper hand in Jewish religious affairs. They became the rabbis of today. As we read in the new Testament, they had strong differences with the Sadducees. They ousted the Sadducees and other Jewish sects, including the Messianic Jews (Christians) from the synagogues.

In dealing with the relatively new festival of Hanukkah, which was only a little over 200 years old, they were somewhat embarrassed by the successful revolt led earlier by the Maccabees. They had not seen God give such deliverance in their struggle for independence against Rome;

thus, they downplayed the political and military aspects of Hanukkah and put their emphasis on the spiritual truths involved.

The legend of the cruse of oil miraculously lasting eight days most likely came from this effort to draw attention to renewed worship, rather than focus on the political and military accomplishments. No one can say for sure whether or not the miracle actually happened. It is not mentioned in either 1 or 2 Maccabees. It is found only in the Babylonian Talmud as quoted above, which was written several hundred years after Christ.

However, it is well to keep in mind that the miraculous supply of oil would be perfectly consistent with the record of God's activities in preserving His people for their historic purpose of bringing forth the Savior of the world. The miraculous is not to be seen as something incredible, but rather, as the very "stuff" of God's acts for man (cf. Gen. 18:14, Luke 1:37 and Matt. 19:26). In the Hebrew Scriptures we find numerous periods of vigorous miraculous activity by God: Creation, Exodus, Elijah-Elisha (cf. oil miracles: 1 Kings 17:16 and 2 Kings 4:5), Daniel and in the New Testament.



Many of our Jewish friends believe whole-heartedly in the Hanukkah miracle of the oil; others do not. It is not for us to denigrate the substance of the Hanukkah because there is no documentation of this miracle. More miraculous, in any event, is the well-documented victory of God's people, though greatly outnumbered by the enemy. Also, let us keep in mind that the Jewish people see in the miracle of

the oil which burned on and on for eight days, a connection with the great miracle of the Jewish people who have lived on and on for so many centuries in spite of continuous wandering and persecution, and are still with us today.

The Hanukkah candles are to be lit when the sun sets. This timing signifies that when the darkness of despair sets in, then faith must burn ever more brightly. The lit candles are to be set near the window so that all may see and know that God delivers His people and His light still shines in the world of darkness.



**VII. SEVENTH EVENING:
The Light**

1 Maccabees 4:50 *"Then they burned incense on the altar and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple."*

"Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days. ...And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival." [Josephus](2)

The question is asked, "Who commanded us to light the Hanukkah candles?" The thought here is that nowhere in Scripture are the people instructed to light candles in their homes. The rabbis answer, "Do it because we tell you to. For it is written in the scripture that you shall be careful to do according to all that the priests tell you. Not to do so is to act presumptuously" (cf. Deuteronomy 17:11).

John 1:1-9, 8:12, 12:35-36, 46 In these passages, Jesus is called "The Light of the World." The prophets had clearly seen that God, the *Ner Tamid*, would personally come into the world's darkness through the Jewish people and bring light to the whole world.

Antiochus Epiphanes put out the "*Ner Tamid*," the perpetual or Eternal Light that God instructed the Jewish People to burn continually in the tent of meeting and later on in the temple (cf. Ex. 27:20-21)

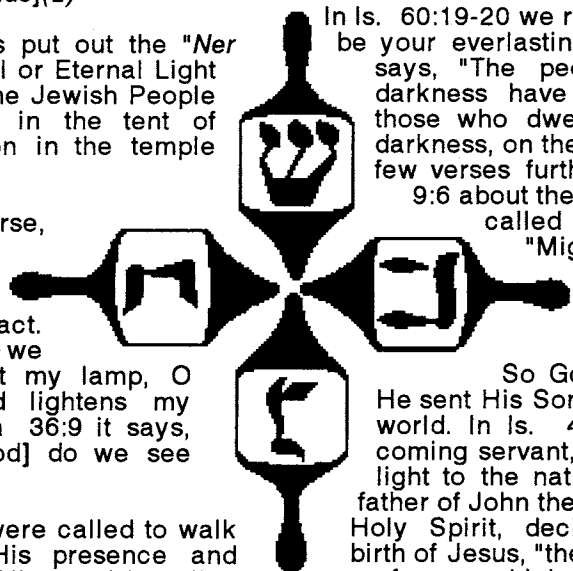
God Himself, of course, is the Light of His people, but the *Ner Tamid* was to remind them always of this fact. In 2 Sam. 22:29 we read, "Yes, thou art my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness." In Psalm 36:9 it says, "In Thy Light [O God] do we see light."

The Jewish People were called to walk in God's light -- His presence and blessing and word. His word is called light (cf. Ps. 119:105). It is interesting to note that one of the earliest Zionist groups to come back to Palestine before the turn of this present century was called *Bilu*. The four letters of that name correspond to the first four letters of the four words in Is. 2:5 that say, "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk." Significantly, the last few words of that verse are omitted. Those words are, "in the light of the Lord." We pray for the day when all the Jewish People will see and walk in the full light of God revealed in Jesus.

In Is. 60:19-20 we read that "The Lord will be your everlasting light." In Is. 9:2 it says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined." A few verses further on we read in Is. 9:6 about the son given them who is called among other names "Mighty God." The connection between the coming of the Son seems obvious.

So God kept His promises. He sent His Son to be the Light of the world. In Is. 49:6 it is said of this coming servant, "I will give you as a light to the nations." Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared concerning the birth of Jesus, "the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (Luke 1:78-79.) The righteous old man, Simeon, seeing Jesus in the temple, declared over the baby that he was "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel" (Luke 2:32).

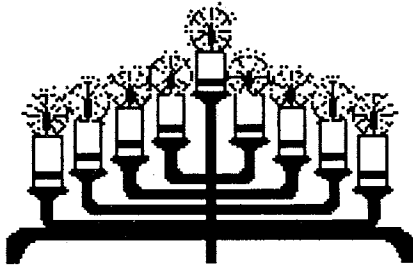
Jesus knew He was the promised light of the world. He proclaimed it. He lived it. What is more, those who believe in Him are filled with His light. Christians are also called the light of the world. Jesus spoke this truth in the sermon on the



mount (Matt. 5:14-15). The Apostle Paul said of Jesus that "being the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23). Then he said, "It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

The advent of Jesus is our Hanukkah glow. It is for us who walk in His light to use every effort to lead Israel to rejoice not in any flickering lights of man-made origin, but in the eternal radiance of the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

"The Symbol of Hanukkah is a candlestick with nine little candles. The flickering lights of nine little candles mean a great deal in the pitch darkness of night. But when the Sun arises then the candle light appears pale and insignificant. Thus to us Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, has dimmed the candle lights of Hanukkah. We thank God for these small lights during the darkness of the past night. But we go on to live in the daylight from on high." (3)



VIII. EIGHTH EVENING: The Servant

1 Maccabees 4:44-46 *"They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it bring reproach upon them, for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them."*

The Jews of the first Hanukkah festival looked for a special prophet to arise among them some day. He would answer questions they couldn't handle. He would speak with the full authority of God. Moses had told them clearly of such a

coming prophet. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren -- him you shall heed" (Deut. 18:15).

The question of what to do with the desecrated stones of the holy altar was too weighty a problem for them to solve. Still special, they were not to be casually disposed of. What should they do? The answer resembles a common phrase on the lips of Israelis today, "when Messiah comes..." They fully believed God would some day provide a prophet; even *THE* prophet, the Messiah.

To show the sacredness of the Hanukkah lights the custom came into being to have a ninth candle on the Hanukkah menorah, or candlestick. Our eighth evening is really about that ninth candle, called the *Shammes*, or servant-candle. The word "*shammes*" refers to an actual servant, such as the keeper of a synagogue. Melissa Moskowitz remembers such a figure from the synagogue of her childhood:

"How dear that synagogue was to me! As we entered its doorways, we were greeted each week by the *shammes*, Harold. And, if we were particularly lucky that week he would sneak us a piece of candy from some endless source he kept hidden in the closet behind his desk."(4)

The servant candle is extremely important. The Hanukkah candles are seen as so significant that they cannot be lit by an ordinary match. The eight candles must be lit from the ninth. Also, it is emphasized that no work is to be done by the light of the Hanukkah candles. Their one purpose is to testify to the great deliverance God gave His people in 165 B.C. Of course, it is impossible not to use the light of the eight candles, but by having the extra servant light it is as though they are benefiting from that additional light only. Does it make sense? This is an example of typical Talmudic reasoning.

Isaiah 53 The prophet the Jews expected turned out to be Jesus of Nazareth. To Christians, Jesus is the Light of God that lightens every man. The servant candle is a remarkable symbol of God's only begotten Son coming to serve fallen mankind by becoming one of us and dying to extinguish our darkness of sin and death, and rising again to bring His light into our lives forever.

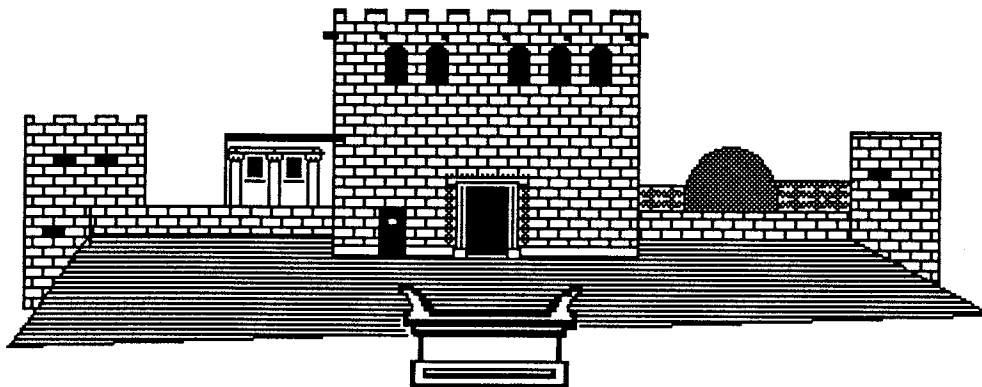
When John the Baptist came, he was asked if he was the prophet. He said no, but instead, pointed to Jesus. John connected the prophet with the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:21, 29). The disciples recognized that Jesus was both the prophet Moses told about and the Servant Isaiah wrote about. "God foretold... that His Messiah should suffer... God will raise up for you a prophet like Moses... God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you in turning everyone of you from your wickedness" (Acts 3:18, 22, 26). Jesus said of Himself, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45).

The great suffering servant seen so clearly in Isaiah 53 is Jesus. Reading Isaiah 53 is like reading of the death of Jesus in the four Gospels. To the believer in Jesus there is no doubt that He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's picture of the Suffering Servant. After His resurrection, Jesus definitely made this connection and taught it (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). The early Christians also knew and taught this, Philip being one example in Acts 8:26-40.

Jesus was willing to serve God the Father by dying to accomplish God's eternal plan

of salvation for fallen mankind. Jesus was willing to serve us by taking our sins upon Himself and dying in our place that we might be cleansed by His blood and restored to our Heavenly Father forever. The prophet the Maccabees looked for came to deal with more than dirty stones. He came to deal with all of the world's dirty sin and guilt.

John 10:22-33 It was stones that people picked up to throw at Jesus after they asked Him to plainly tell them whether or not He was the Messiah. His answer did not please them. His being the Messiah depended on whether individual sheep would receive Him as their Shepherd. For those that did, His suffering servanthood would be their access to forgiveness and eternal life. He revealed to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear that He was God's servant who was sent into the dark world as the Light of Life. How appropriate that this discussion would take place as is indicated by v. 22, in the temple, in winter, at the Feast of Dedication, or the Festival of Hanukkah. Jesus celebrated this festival in the anticipation of the time when His own body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, would be torn down and rededicated to the eternal, life-giving purposes of God (Matt. 26:61-64).



FOOTNOTES

1. *The American Jewish World*, Minneapolis, MN, Dec. 12, 1983.
2. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Ch. VII, v. 7.
3. Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel In the Feasts of Israel*, Ft. Washington PA, 1954, p. 65.
4. Perlman, Sue Ed., *ISSUES*, "Hanukkah," Vol 3:5, Hineni Ministries, San Francisco, CA, 1981.



Chapter 7. PURIM

Introduction



Along with Hanukkah, Purim (*poor-im*) is considered a minor festival of Judaism because it is not one of the five great annual observances commanded in the Torah. Also like Hanukkah, Purim has grown to a special place of favor among the Jewish people over the centuries, and is included in this Bible study guide along with the major festivals in order to assist Christians in better knowing the customs and celebrations of their Jewish neighbors.

The closest thing in Jewish custom to the Mardi Gras is the celebration of Purim. In many places the celebration of this feast takes place in the synagogue and in parties in homes of members. There are games and humorous readings, masks and costumes, special foods and a joyful spirit.

In the State of Israel, a carnival spirit is expressed in parades, balls, plays and festivities. In the Talmud, a rabbi says that one is duty bound to be so happy on Purim that he knows not when to curse Haman and bless Mordecai. Sometimes Haman, the enemy in the Purim story, is even hanged in effigy. The giving of gifts is an important part of Purim, for the Jewish saying is that "Joy is a twin; to be happy we must make others happy."

The celebration of Purim grew out of the story of Queen Ester and the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction as described in the Book of Ester in the Scriptures. It is good to be reminded that Biblical history is our history. From God's dealings with those who have gone before, we learn to know what He is like today; we learn what we can expect from God in our own times.

Purim comes in early spring during our Lenten Season, around late February or early March. It falls on the 14th and 15th days of Adar, the twelfth and last month of the Jewish calendar.(1) Victor Buksbazen in his book *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel* says,

"Among the Feasts of Israel, Purim, also known as the Feast of Esther, holds a much favored position. According to some of the rabbis, when Messiah shall come, all the feasts will become redundant, but Purim shall never cease... This high esteem for Purim would be puzzling were it not for the fact that it is an expression of faith in the invisible working of an Invisible God behind the scenes of human events. The story of Esther is a fitting tribute to the God of an exiled people, without a temple or a priesthood, without a prophet or even a great spiritual leader, who nevertheless are deeply conscious of the divine watchcare upon them." (2)

The historical setting of Purim takes place late in the Babylonian captivity of Judah. As prophesied by Jeremiah (25:11, 29:10), God's people were to be in exile seventy years. In 606 B.C. the Babylonians had captured the Kingdom of Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and taken a host of captives back with them to Babylonia. In 536 B.C. the Persians conquered Babylon, and their King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their own land to rebuild their cities, especially Jerusalem and the Temple. The first group to return was led by Zerubbabel (See Ezra 1-6).

A great attack against the Jews came in 478 B.C. as they were preparing to return to their own land. Haman became the grand vizir, or prime minister of Persia. Satan had inspired great hatred for the Jews in Haman's heart, and from his position of power he plotted to destroy all the Jewish people in the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire. Few, if any, Jews lived outside of those provinces. Had Haman succeeded there would have been an end of this nation. Because the Jewish people have survived similar plots of genocide before and after the time of Haman, Purim has become a significant observance for them.

The Book of Esther tells how God frustrated Haman's attack on His people, and preserved them for the great task He had assigned to them, giving the world His own Son through them. Purim was instituted to celebrate this dramatic deliverance in perpetuity.

The time frame of Esther is during the reign of Xerxes I (485-465 B.C.) He is called Ahasuerus in Esther. The events of Esther happen after Ezra 6 and 7, and the second and third returns led by Ezra and Nehemiah.

From 483 to 480 B.C. Xerxes prepared for his great invasion of Greece. Esther 1:3-4 tells us that in the third year of his reign he gave a six-month banquet for all his government and military leaders at Susa, one of his capitals. Susa (also called Shushan) was located more than 200 miles north of the head of the Persian Gulf, in what is now western Iran. The 180-day banquet was really a gigantic military brain-storming session. Xerxes most likely brought his leaders to the capital in relays. Not all of them could be absent from their duties at the same time. During the six months they planned for the mass movement of men and material across Asia Minor, set strategy for battles on land and sea, and

were impressed and inspired by reviewing the resources of great Persia.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, quotes Xerxes announcing his ambitions: "As Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius have enlarged the empire, I wish to do the same. I propose to bridge the Hellespont, march through Europe, and fire Athens for burning Sardis. By reducing Attica and Greece, the sky will be the only boundary of Persia." (3)

Fortunately, Xerxes' great plans failed. He was badly defeated by the Greeks, thus proving once again that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). After this long military interlude Xerxes returned home to Susa. An empire-wide search was made for a new queen. The Jewish people were once again set up to be the scapegoats for all the kingdom's problems. The stage was set for our Purim story.

What follows are seven Bible studies on Purim adapted from a manuscript written by Kearney L. Frantsen, as was the previous chapter on Hanukkah. In each of the seven sections, a comparison of various attributes of Esther and Mordecai is made with similar attributes in the story of Joseph, Moses, Jesus and in our own story. Rev. Frantsen is the director of a pan-Lutheran evangelistic association, Good News for Israel, in Minneapolis Minn. The manuscript was originally commissioned by the LCMS Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People in 1986, and was published by Synod's Board for Evangelism Services as a part of the "Feasts of Israel" Bible study series.



I. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE POSITIONED: Esther 1 & 2

Esther 2:17: "The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

Purim is like Hanukkah. It is the second Jewish festival celebrating God's providence and preservation of His people. As is the case with much of the Scriptural record, God's Jewish people are at the center of world history. From a reading of modern history and current events, we know that this is still true.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the Jewish remnant that returned to Judah and Jerusalem. In Esther the emphasis is on those who stayed behind in self-imposed exile. God saw beforehand what most of His people would do, and even though they disappointed Him by not returning home, they were not beyond His care.

God saw that Satan was soon to launch an unprecedented attack upon His Jewish people. In His *providence* He prepared ahead of time to thwart this attack. Providence is literally *pro-video*, "to see beforehand." As God is called *Yahweh Yirah* (God provides) in the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22), so here God sees beforehand and *provides* for His people.

In the Purim story recorded in the Book of Esther, we watch God as He sees danger coming and provides the protection and deliverance needed. First, He efficiently places His key people in the right positions for later action.

Esther 1 tells us how God begins by removing the Gentile queen from her throne. Queen Vashti (the name means "beautiful woman") was ordered by her drunken husband to show her beauty to all his assembled guests. She bravely refused and was quickly set aside. This set the stage for one of God's key people to become queen.

Esther 2. In this chapter we meet Esther, the "star" of our story. Her name literally means *star*. It is a version of the name of the Persian goddess Ishtar. Her Hebrew name was *Haddasah*, which means *myrtle*. The fragrance of the myrtle tree reminded people of Esther's virtue, charm and beauty that spread far and wide like the

aroma of myrtle. Her Hebrew name was not made general knowledge, and neither was her Jewishness. She was entered in a kingdom-wide beauty contest to find the new queen. She was the winner because God gave her grace and favor in the sight of the king. God's providential hand was certainly evident in the elevation of this common Jewish girl to the queen's throne.

We also meet the other "star" of this story in chapter 2. Mordecai was a Jew whose great-grandfather, Kish, had come from Jerusalem as a captive of the Babylonians over a hundred years earlier. Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin, which is very significant, as we will see in section II.

Mordecai had become the foster-father of his young first cousin, Esther, who had been orphaned. In v 11, we note that he was daily at the entrance to the harem where Esther lived. This indicates that he was likely a minor official, perhaps a doorman of the nearby house of the eunuchs, or some such position. In vv. 19-23 there is the account of how Mordecai saved the king's life by getting wind of a plot and reporting it to the king by way of his foster daughter, Esther.

Thus we see in the first two chapters of Esther how God positioned two key persons in the Persian government at a time when God's people will come under attack by the Persian nation. This is reminiscent of other such positionings in the history of Israel.

Genesis 37 tells how God got young Joseph into Egypt, and thus into a strategic position for what lay ahead. In Gen. 45:7-8a Joseph said to his brothers who had malevolently sold him to Egyptian slave traders years earlier, "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God."

Exodus 2:1-10 At a time when Israel was becoming a threat to the Pharaoh of Egypt, a command went out to kill all the baby boys of the Israelites so the population of this captive group would be kept under control. Moses was miraculously saved as he was set afloat in a papyrus basket by his mother and found by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses was adopted into the royal family. His growing up in Pharaoh's house put him in a position to know the workings of the royal court and to exercise a bit of influence there when he was called by God to lead Israel out of bondage.

Galatians 4:4-5 The incarnation of Jesus celebrates the dramatic act of God to position His Son in human flesh to save humanity. Like the other miraculous positionings noted above, this was done at first inconspicuously. Jesus came into the world through a lowly Jewish maiden. He was placed in a lowly manger, and heralded by angels to common shepherds. God saw our human need for a Savior, promised that Savior, and positioned a people through whom He actually provided that needed Savior.

Romans 6:3-4 We as God's people today have been given a marvelous position for abundant life now and for eternity. This position is *in Christ*. God's act of Baptismal Grace has placed us into union with His Son and made us new persons of faith. As we seek to 'live a new life' for Jesus, we marvel daily at the positions in which God places us to influence others with the good news of salvation.



II. GOD'S PEOPLE RESIST PRIDE: Esther 3

Esther 3:2b, 6. "Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance... But Haman disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus."

Proverbs 16:18 We are reminded that "pride goes before a fall." In this lesson we see an example of this principle. Haman was promoted by the king to the highest position in the kingdom next to the king himself. In this regard he is a type of Satan, who as the angel Lucifer was highest of all the angels before his rebellion and fall. Haman is also a type of Anti-Christ. He was one of Satan's choice vessels for manifesting haughty hatred

against the Jewish people. Satan hated the Jews because the promised Messiah, who would crush his head, was to come from their ranks (*cf.* Gen. 3:15, 12:1-3).

Esther 3:1 Haman is called "the Agagite." Jewish tradition links Haman to the Amalekites, who made themselves the chief enemy of the Israelites after their exit from Egypt under Moses. Exodus 17:8-16 tells of their first encounter. It concludes, "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." 1 Samuel 15 tells how Saul (the first king of Israel and a Benjaminite) was instructed by the Lord to destroy the Amalekites and their king Agag. Saul did not utterly destroy these traditional bitter enemies, and he was rejected by God and his kingship given to David.

Amelek means *warlike*, and *Agag* means *fiery*. Haman was both. As the highest representative of the king, Haman was given the honor of receiving the worshipful obeisance of all the king's subjects.

Mordecai the Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, would not bow to Haman. To do so would be to break the first commandment. Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman was especially noticeable because of his official position. It was a great embarrassment to Haman and a blow to his pride. Mordecai would only praise and worship the true god. Haman was furious. He determined to wipe out all the Jewish people (*cf.* Psalm 83:4).

Haman first cast lots (the word *Purim* means *lots*) to determine the very best time to destroy the Jews. The lot (*pur*) fell on the 13th day of Adar, the twelfth Jewish month. This date was eleven months off. Did God cause it to be so in order that the Jews would have ample time in which to get ready?

Haman brought his case against the Jews before the king. V. 8 contains the charges. Not much has changed over the years. These are the same basic shop-worn accusations that anti-Semites still use today: 1] The Jews are an alien element, scattered and dispersed. 2] They do not conform to society's norms; their laws are different. 3] They are disloyal and lack

patriotism; they don't keep the king's laws. 4] They are a burden on society; they don't profit the king.

The king, perhaps thoughtlessly, let himself be persuaded by Haman. He authorized the *progrom*, the final solution of the "Jewish problem": their total extermination. The edict was sealed with the king's signet ring and became irrevocable law. The orders were sent out to all the provinces to annihilate all the Jews in one day, the 13th of Adar.

In 168 B.C. the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, determined to wipe out the Jews spiritually by making them all conform to his Hellenistic practices. God intervened by raising up the Macabees. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah celebrates that great deliverance. In our own times Hitler had the same objective as Haman, and he even timed some of his most vicious attacks against the Jews to fall deliberately right on the Festival of Purim. He was mocking God.

The last verse of Chapter 3 says that the king and Haman sat down to drink. Perhaps they had to dull their dark minds to the drastic and devilish deed they had determined upon. The people were puzzled and troubled by this savage order. As Buksbazen says, "There is something very tragic and ominous in such a state of affairs and divine retribution cannot be far delayed." (4)

While the apocryphal book, *Additions to Esther* is not canonical, there is a prayer put in the mouth of Mordecai that is worth repeating here:

"Thou Lord knowest all things, and thou knowest that it was neither in contempt nor pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Haman. For I could have been content with good will for the salvation of Israel to kiss the soles of his feet. But I did this, that I might not prefer the glory of man above the glory of God; neither will I worship any but thee, O God, neither will I do it in pride. And now, O Lord God and King, spare thy people..."(Additions to Esther, Chapter 13).

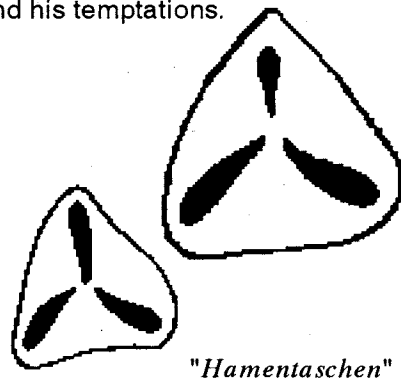
Genesis 39 Again we see this consistently faithful behavior in the Joseph story. Joseph was tempted in his master's house by Potiphar's wife. Her lustful pride would have whatever it desired. Joseph could have let his pride lead him into an affair that could have brought special favors and

advancement his way. He preferred to suffer false accusations and imprisonment rather than bow to the god of lust. He said in V. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Exodus 2:11-15 Moses' anger led him to kill an Egyptian slave master who was mistreating a Hebrew. Moses fled into the wilderness and was tempted by fear to stay out of Egypt and away from the mission for which God had positioned him. It was still fear mixed with wounded pride tempting Moses when God called to him from the burning bush and prompted him to cry "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (Ex. 4:13). Faith overcame fear, and Moses went on with the strength of the Lord to confront the Pharaoh and lead God's people out of Egyptian bondage.

Matthew 4:8-10 Jesus was also tempted with pride by the devil who offered Him all the power and authority in the world from atop the pinnacle of the temple. Not only could Jesus avoid the shame and pain of the cross; He could be the most powerful man in the world. In return, Satan desires only that Jesus turn and worship him. In his pride, Satan always desires and demands worship from those he successfully tempts, just as Haman did. Jesus, the faithful Son of God, responds "Begone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

1 Corinthians 10:13 As followers of Messiah Jesus, we also face many temptations to fear and to pride. We can choose between the way of life or death in big things and small. We can let God help us resist temptation and be more like Jesus, Joseph, Moses and Mordecai. There is nothing uncommon about being tempted; what is all too uncommon in our world is faithfulness which trusts in God for deliverance, for endurance, for the way of escape. That way of escape is through Jesus, the Messiah, who won victory over Satan and his temptations.



"Hamentaschen"

III. GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE A PURPOSE: Esther 4

Esther 4:14 Mordecai's message to Esther: "If you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from *another quarter*, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Mordecai and all the Jews went into great mourning when they learned of Haman's plot to kill them. Mordecai sent a copy of the written decree to Esther, and ordered her to go straight to the king and intercede for her people.

Esther didn't immediately obey her foster parent. She saw problems, and she was afraid. For one thing, the king didn't know she was a Jewess (v. 2:10). She risked quick banishment if the king found out. Also, she had not talked to the king for over a month, and she was not sure if he would be open to her entreaty. Then there was the fact that no one, not even the queen, could approach the king on his or her own initiative. To do so was to risk death. The king had to hold out his scepter to the one approaching. It was a puzzling and fearsome situation.

Mordecai urgently sent a message challenging Esther to step forth courageously on behalf of her people. He warned her that she was in the same danger as all Jews, and that she wouldn't escape because she was queen. She was reminded that God was in control, and He would deliver His people with or without her involvement. Finally, Mordecai pointed out her unique position as queen, a position given her by God. Mordecai wonders out loud whether or not it was for this very purpose of saving the Jews that God gave Esther her position.

Esther responded faithfully. She called for a three day fast by her fellow Jews in the city. The purposeful resolve of her fearless foster father, Mordecai, seemed to have been infused in her. She proposed in her heart to do whatever she could and let the chips fall where they may. "If I perish, I perish!" was her courageous cry. Esther's decision put her in the Hebrew Scriptures as a great woman of faith. Her memory is honored by the Jews around the world down to our day. She reminds us of the One who was to come. This exalted queen was not ashamed or afraid to identify herself with a doomed people.

God's Son came to be one with us to redeem us by dying in our place.

John Whitcomb in his commentary on Esther quotes Carey Moore regarding Esther:

"Like all human beings, Esther was not without flaw; but certainly our heroine should be judged more by the brave act she performs than by the natural fears she had to fight against. The rash man acts without fear; the brave man, in spite of it." (5)

Genesis 40 We also see purpose in Joseph's time of difficulty in prison. While there he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker. He knew in his heart that God had brought him to Egypt for a great purpose, but he was not sure what it was yet. He looked ahead to the future God had for him when he said, "Remember me when it is well with you, and do me the kindness, I pray you to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this prison" (v. 14). V. 23 tells us the butler forgot Joseph, but we know that God had not forgotten him.

Hebrews 11:24-6 Despite fears and temptations, Moses acted in faith and let his identity as an Israelite be known as he left the court of Pharaoh. He regarded faithfulness to the Lord and to his mission more highly than the treasures of the kingdom of Egypt or even his own safety.

Luke 9:20-36, 51-62 Peter correctly declares that Jesus is the Messiah of God. Jesus immediately tells the disciples that He must suffer and be killed. Later He talks about the necessity of losing one's life to gain it. Later still in the chapter, He meets on the mountain with Moses and Elijah and they encourage Him in His purposeful determination to go straight ahead on the course His Father has set for Him. V. 51 tells us that Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem. Our Lord was filled with great purpose in spite of the danger. He knew He was born to die for the sins of the people. He knew that there was no crown without a cross, and that the true crown was not of this world. He loved us and wanted to make it possible for us to be free from our sins and live with Him forever. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2). What a Lord and Savior!

V. 62 Jesus says to those who would follow Him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God." We too are called to a

high purpose. God did not purchase our salvation just to put us on the shelf, or to have us put ourselves on some shelf in our life of service for Him. We are saved from our sin to serve. We, like the Jewish people, are blessed to be a blessing. As Jesus set His face to go forward where the Father's will pointed the way, we too are to go forward in faith where our Lord leads the way. He says to us "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27.)



IV. GOD'S PEOPLE MAKE PLANS, EXPOSE PLOTS, SHOW PERSEVERANCE, AND ARE PROTECTED AND PROMOTED: Esther 5, 6 & 7

Esther 6:13b and 7:10b Haman's wife Zeresh told him: "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him... So, they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai."

Esther, fortified by her faith-building fast and that of her people, approached the king and found favor in his sight. Her only request was for the king and Haman to be her guests at a private banquet. The king agreed and the banquet was held. She requested they come for a second banquet the next day.

Haman was very happy with this special attention, but just the sight of Mordecai robbed him of all his joy. He was obsessed with hatred for this particular Jew and for all Jews. There are people like this today. It is very sad; they actually end up hurting themselves. In his wrath, Haman went home and built gallows on which he planned to hang Mordecai.

Victor Buksbazen aptly describes the anti-Semite:

"And Mordecai the Jew becomes Haman's obsession. An obsession not uncommon among many otherwise reasonable and intelligent people. When you speak to them they are rational, as long as you do not touch the subject of the Jew. But mention the Jew and they see red. The Jew, in their imagination, is behind everything. All their

own personal problems and frustrations, all international complexities and human woes, all that ever went wrong, is due to the Jew -- the serpent in the fool's paradise." (6)

Esther 6 presents a most ironic twist in the story. The night before Esther's second banquet, the king couldn't sleep. Instead of counting sheep, he had kingdom chronicles read to him. It happened that he heard the account from several years past of how Mordecai the Jew had saved his life. Also, he suddenly realized that nothing had been done to reward Mordecai.

By now the morning had come and Haman entered the palace eager to get to work bright and early. The king asked Haman what should be done for a man whom "the king delights to honor"? Haman, thinking that the king could only be talking about himself, advised the king to parade such a man through the city streets on horseback in royal robes and wearing a royal crown. The king liked this idea and ordered Haman to see to it personally that Mordecai was honored that way on that very day. Of course, Haman was mortified, but he had no choice but to obey.

A humorous story or legend in the Talmud tells that Haman's daughter was viewing the parade from her roof. She thought the man leading the horse must be Mordecai, so she dumped a chamber pot on his man. When he looked up, she was shocked to see it was her father (Megillah 16a). Be that as it may, after the humiliating event, Haman hurried home for consolation. But his wife warned him that the day's happenings were a sign of his impending downfall. Then Haman was urgently called to come to the second banquet with Esther and the king.

At this second banquet, Esther pleaded with the king for her life and the life of her people. The king doesn't make the connection between Esther's plea and the edict against the Jews he had signed several months earlier. He asked who it was who was behind this threat to her and her people. Esther said "a foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Haman was terrified. The king rushed out for help. Haman threw himself on the couch beside Esther to plead for his life. The king returned, saw this, and thought Haman was actually assaulting his beloved queen. He immediately ordered Haman to be hanged on the very gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai.

In like manner, the enemy of the Jews finds his curses coming back upon his own head. The Word of God to Abraham, "I will curse those who curse you," was once again literally fulfilled in history. God, in His divine retribution, often repays "in kind" the plots against His people. Haman would have hanged Mordecai the Jew, but he was hanged himself on the same gallows. God is able to keep His promises.

Genesis 41:1-45 Joseph was taken from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams of seven fat and seven lean cows, and similar ears of corn. Seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Joseph boldly suggested what needed to be done. He told Pharaoh to store up food during the good years to prepare for the coming famine. Pharaoh chose Joseph on the spot to oversee this huge project, and in effect made him his Prime Minister. Just like Mordecai, Joseph was royally robed, driven through the streets in highest honor in the chariot behind that of Pharaoh. Here was another rags to riches story come true.

Exodus 7-12 Moses also gained a kind of grim respect in the court of Pharaoh, as he again and again accurately predicted plagues to visit Egypt as long as Israel was held in bondage. Ultimately, at the cost of the firstborn of Egypt, Pharaoh relented and allowed Moses to lead a parade of Israel out of that kingdom of oppression.

Matthew 27:11-31 Pilate was in a difficult position. He was torn between justice and giving in to the will of the mob. Like Haman, he was warned by his wife, who had had a bad dream about it, to "have nothing to do with that man." Unlike Ahasuerus, Pilate could not bring himself to do the right thing, but washed his hands of the situation and allowed the crucifixion to proceed. Jesus too was paraded before the people with a crown and a royal robe, but in another ironic twist, His crown was made of thorns, and His robe was the clothing of mockery. Jesus died on the cross that Satan, the accuser, erected for our eternal demise, and in that sacrifice won for all of us evil and unworthy people eternal peace with God. Philippians 2:5-10 tells us that Messiah Jesus, though He was God, yet emptied Himself and became obedient to death on a despised cross. Because of this sacrifice, God the Father highly exalted Jesus so that now His Name is worthy for everyone to honor.

Jesus' death was not defeat, but victory. He suffered not for His own sins-- He didn't have any-- but to take our sins upon Himself. Something gracious happened on the cross that means forgiveness and life for all who receive it by faith. To receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord dooms Satan's plan for us. "God disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Messiah on the cross" (Col. 2:15).



Romans 5:17 In the same ironic way, God promises to win our battles for us just when they may look like defeats at the hands of the devil and the world. If through the trespasses of one man, Adam, sin holds us in bondage, so in the sacrificial death of one man, Jesus, will God's grace be available to us. God's grace is effective in producing works of righteousness in us when our sin is atoned for in Messiah's blood. So Paul can write in the face of death "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:56) and again, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). With promises like that, along with many more promises in all of Scripture, we followers of Jesus can certainly see that we have much room for growth in winning spiritual battles in our daily lives.

V. GOD'S PEOPLE DISPLAY POWER: Esther 8:1-9:19

Esther 9:2b "And no one could make a stand against the Jews, for fear of them had fallen upon all peoples."

Mordecai was elevated to the position Haman had held. Esther then went before the king, asking him to revoke the edict of death against the Jews. The old edict could not be revoked, but a new edict was granted that neutralized the first one. The new law permitted the Jews to defend themselves from attack on the day that had been assigned for their destruction, the 13th of Adar.

Suddenly the tables were turned. Now all the people in the 127 provinces of Persia knew that the Jews were in royal favor. Great gladness and joy filled the hearts of all the Jews. Great respect for the Jews filled the hearts and minds of most of the Gentiles too. In fact, many Gentiles went so far as to declare themselves to be Jews, "for fear of the Jews had fallen upon them" (v. 8:17b).

Vv. 9:1-19 describes how the Jews did successfully defend themselves from their enemies when the great day finally came. Yes, there were still those unfortunate



people obsessed with hatred of the Jews, who rose up to slay the Jews according to the original edict. They could not restrain themselves when they had a legal right to kill the Jews. They attacked the Jews to their own downfall, however. Most likely they did kill some Jewish people; we are not told of this, but there was some fierce fighting. We are told, however, that about 75,000 enemies of the Jews were destroyed in the fighting on the 13th of Adar.

The king granted a special request of Esther that the Jews of Shushan (Susa, the capital) be allowed to use the next day also, to deal with their foes and to hang the ten sons of Haman. Thus it came about that the Jews in the country and outlying districts rested on the 14th of Adar, while the Jews in Shushan rested in the 15th. Therefore, ever after, the 14th of Adar was called Purim, and the 15th was called Shushan Purim.

God's people were given God's power and they used it for victory. They had a spiritual, moral, psychological and physical advantage in the struggle for their survival with Satan and his soldiers. God had given them His Word. God had kept His Word. God's living word, the Messiah, was on their side.

Two stanzas from the great Reformation hymn "A Mighty Fortress", tell it all:

*With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One,
Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this?
Jesus Christ it is, Of sabaoth Lord,
And there's none other God;
He holds the field forever.*

*Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still
scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him*

A Purim story called *Mordecai and the Three Students* shows how the Jews have stood on the solid promises of God's Word in times of crisis:

"When Mordecai learned about the decree, signed by the king, to kill all Jews, he became very upset. He walked the streets of Shushan, trying to decide how to help

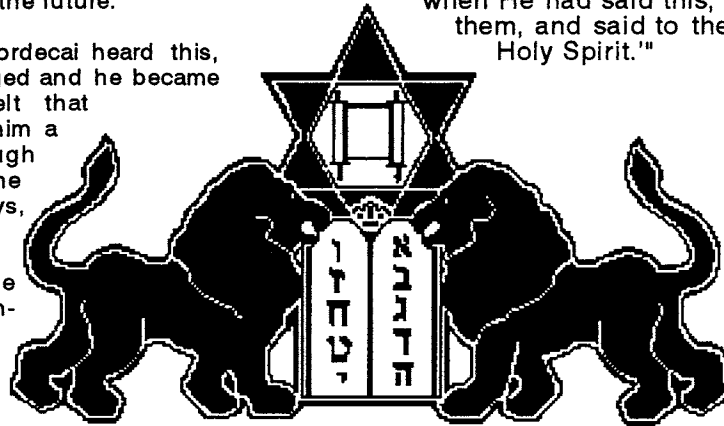
his fellow Jews. He met three little Jewish boys calmly walking home from school. Mordecai asked each boy, "What did you learn today that makes you so calm?"

"The first boy answered, 'I learned, "Be not afraid of sudden terror, nor of the wickedness of the wicked, when it comes.'"

"The second boy answered, 'I learned this verse, "Take counsel, and evil will be brought to nothing; speak the word and it will not stand; for God is with us.'"

"The third boy answered, 'I learned this: "I am your Lord who will help you as I have done in the past, and I will carry you and will save you in the future.'"

"As soon as Mordecai heard this, his mood changed and he became happy. He felt that God had sent him a message through the mouths of the three little boys, and he was sure that God would save the Jews and punish Haman." (7)



sioned His disciples to take this Good News out to a hungry world of starving people, dying in their sin.

2 Corinthians 2:14-15 Each follower of Jesus is called, not to loaf, but to be a loaf of freshly baked living bread. Paul tells us that we are like a fragrant aroma spreading the sweetness and substance of the Gospel wherever we go. It is important to remember that when the Lord calls us and sends us, He also equips and enables us by His Holy Spirit. A quaint way of putting it is "If the Lord bids the ride, He will provide the horse." In John 20:21-2 we read, "Jesus said to them... As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'receive the Holy Spirit.'"

**VI. GOD'D
PEOPLE
CELEBRATE
PURIM:
Esther
9:20-32**

Genesis 41:46-57 Granted great authority and power, Joseph used it to the full. He stored up the extra grain from the good years, and then he released it to a hungry nation and a hungry world in the bad years. V. 57 tells us that the whole known world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because it was a universal famine. Joseph was a type of Christ, in that he provided life-giving food to all who came and asked.

Exodus 13ff Moses, too, was a type of Christ, leading the people out of bondage and into freedom with God-given authority. In the Red Sea and in the wilderness, Moses performed many powerful acts on behalf of the people by God's grace. Bread in the wilderness was always provided to nourish the people.

John 6:47-51 Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which literally means *house of bread*. He proclaimed Himself and proved Himself to be *the Bread of Life*, the true manna that God sent down to earth. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever (v. 51). Therefore, Jesus commis-

Esther 9:20-22 "And Mordecai... enjoined them that they should keep the 14th day of the month Adar and also the 15th day of the same, year by year, as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending choice portions to one another and gifts to the poor."

Exactly who gets credit for establishing the Feast of Purim is not clear. In 9:21 it is Mordecai; in 9:27 it is the Jews as a whole; and in 9:32 it is by command of Queen Esther. It doesn't really matter; what matters is that the Jewish people had a great deliverance to celebrate, and as a lasting memorial in honor of it, a new festival was added to the Jewish calendar.

This festival is called *PURIM* after the Hebrew word *PUR*, which means *LOT*. Haman had cast the lot to determine which day of the year would be the most favorable for destroying his enemies the Jews. Ironically then, Haman the enemy

is the very one who ends up giving Purim its name.

Purim is a sort of Jewish *Mardi Gras*. It is a holiday of feasting and the utmost levity. The concluding section of this chapter describes in general how the Jewish people celebrate Purim today.

Purim, like Hanukkah, is always relevant to the Jews. Hyyim Schauss puts it this way: "Esther is a book that depicts not just one, but all periods; it is a book that remains forever new because Jewish enemies will not allow it grow old." (8)

Rebbi Jacob Neusner does a good job of contrasting the Festival of Purim, which is celebrated today in a mostly secular way, with the other very serious festivals delineated in the Torah.

"The portentous, cosmic themes of the Days of Awe (creation, revelation, redemption, sin and atonement,) the grand historical and natural celebration of the festivals (Israel's redemption from Egypt, the revelation of the Torah, the rejoicing over the harvest,) these leave little room for the simple, worldly fun of Purim. The celebration of the People's redemption from Egypt differs from the rejoicing over the people's salvation from a petty conniving vizir (Prime Minister.) The one calls forth Torah, ritual, prayer and psalm; the other calls forth eating, drinking and witty Purim-Torah. Purim and Pesach pair the world with the cosmic: the humble Jew and his troubles here and now, with exalter, historical Israel redeemed. On Passover the Jew rejoices. On Purim, he has fun. In the Judaic tradition there is room for both." (9)

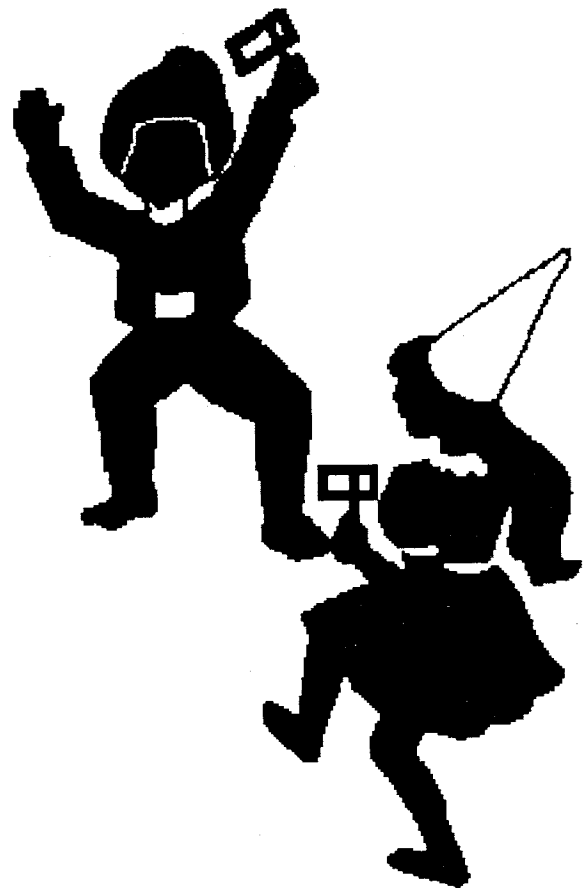
Genesis 42-47 tells how Joseph was reunited with his brothers and father. This was a great time of rejoicing for the descendants of Abraham. God had again proved able and willing to preserve His chosen people (in this case, from famine) for the all-important mission He had created them for: the manifesting of His only-begotten Son, the Messiah. Vv. 43:33-4 reads "And the eleven brothers sat before Joseph, ...Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him."

Exodus 15:1-21 The singing, dancing and celebration of Israel when they had gotten safely through the Red Sea and Pharaoh's pursuing army did not was glorious. The

song of Moses and of Miriam in this chapter are used as joyous songs of victory for the believer in Jesus today when he worships the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Jesus instituted a Memorial Feast for His followers to celebrate regularly His victorious Real Presence with them to the end of time. This feast is called Holy Communion because it celebrates the union of Jesus and His Church in a special way. It is called the Lord's Supper because Jesus strengthens His Church by giving her His true Body and Blood. It is called Eucharist because the elements of joy and praise and thanksgiving are very prominent.

Luke 24:35 As Jesus became known to His disciples in His post-resurrection appearances "in the breaking of the bread," so we also come to know Him personally through our celebration of His Body and Blood. As we celebrate His presence among us through joyous worship and praise, so we bring a witness of the joy which is possible in Jesus to those around us in the world.



VII. GOD'S PEOPLE ENJOY PEACE: Esther 10

Esther 10:3 "Mordecai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people."

Proverbs 29:2 "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan."

With the promotion of Mordecai to the highest authority next to the king, quiet and tranquility settled upon Persia and its 127 provinces. A God-fearing man had been given authority. "Mordecai ruled in righteousness, and righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

The Jewish people recognized a great man in Mordecai-- great because of his commitment to God. Mordecai was also very popular with his people. Why was this so? It was because he looked out for their welfare and spoke peace to them.

Welfare is the Hebrew word, *tov*, and it refers to everything good, in the broadest sense, from material good to moral good. The King James version emphasizes the material good by translating it "wealth."

Peace is the Hebrew word, *shalom*, and like *tov* it also refers to man's total well-being; including prosperity, health, safety, harmony, completeness, wholeness, fulfillment, spiritual blessings, and covenant relationship. (10)

Mordecai spoke for God as well as for the king. The Psalmist says, "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, to His saints, to those who turn to Him in their hearts:" (Ps. 85:8). Mordecai spoke to his Jewish people about the importance of their covenant with their God, the one true Creator and Redeemer. Certainly he was instrumental in smoothing the way for thousands of Jews to return to Israel under Ezra and Nehemiah, encouraging them and facilitating their travels.

So the Esther story, that culminates in the establishing and celebrating of the Festival of Purim, comes to a happy conclusion.

Genesis 45-6 Similarly, the Joseph story ends happily. Joseph was reunited with his father and brothers. Israel and his sons

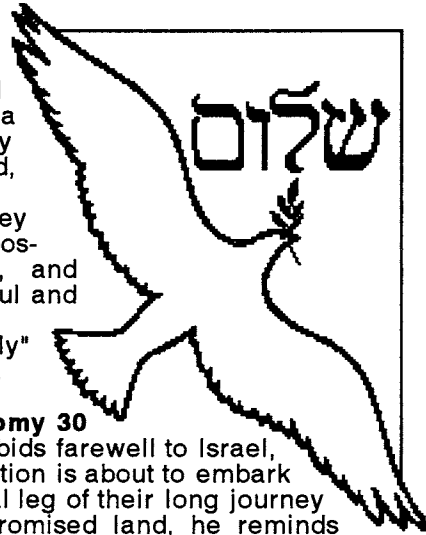
join Joseph in Egypt and are given a particularly good land, Goshen, where "they gained possessions..., and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly" (v. 47: 27).

Deuteronomy 30

As Moses bids farewell to Israel, and the nation is about to embark on the final leg of their long journey into the promised land, he reminds them of the unlimited prosperity and peace which shall be theirs, if only they adhere to the commands of the Lord and remain in His peace. The choice is clear: obey God and live at peace, or disobey God and die. Moses entreats the people to choose life as they enter the promised land and head for the city of Jerusalem (the name literally means *Yahweh's Peace*), which will become the capital of the good land they will settle by God's grace.

Isaiah 9:7a "Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end." Jesus was, and is the great Prince of Peace that Isaiah had prophesied would one day come to His people as a child, born of a virgin. When He was born, the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Jesus makes peace between God and man, and He ministers that peace to those who receive Him. Ephesians 2:14 says plainly that Jesus *IS* our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. Paul writes to the Colossians (1:20) that Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross. Wherever Jesus rules, there is peace, whether it be in an individual heart, a family, a congregation, a nation, the world, or the universe.

Colossians 3:15 The Holy Spirit also calls us in the Gospel to be at peace with God and each other. If we have accepted the peace-making of Jesus on the cross, then we have peace and we will become "peace-makers" in turn. We are called to let the peace of Messiah rule in our hearts, and then we are assured that "the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ (Messiah) Jesus" (Phil. 4:7.)



Excursis 1: Other Purim in History: Special or Local Purim

During the many years since the first Purim, Jews in numerous places faced events that resembled the Esther story. They often established and celebrated local or Personal Purim festivals to show their gratefulness to God each year afterward. In some places, special *megillot* (scrolls) were written to record their story so it could be read and remembered every year on the anniversary of their deliverance. Hundreds of these special Purim are recorded. Many are still being celebrated yearly today. A few typical examples are given below.

1236 A.D. Purim of Narbonne. In a quarrel, a Jew killed a Christian fisherman. A riot broke out and the Jewish quarter was pillaged. Rabbi Meir lost his entire library. Unexpectedly, the governor appeared on the scene with soldiers, stopped the riot, and Rabbi Meir even got his books back.

1380, Purim of Saragossa. Marcus, a converted Jew, accused the Jews of parading before the king with empty scroll cases. This was true, but the Jews meant no disrespect. They only wanted to keep their precious scrolls from unnecessary harm. The king decided to inspect the cases at the next parade. Legend has it that the prophet Elijah appeared and warned the synagogue leaders in time. When the inspection came, the scrolls were properly in place. The king's wrath then fell on Marcus and he was hanged.

1400, Purim of Shiraz, Persia. A Jewish butcher was accused of selling unkosher meat. He got angry, became a Muslim, and accused his former friends of many crimes. The Muslims gave the Jews the choice of death or conversion. They converted. One month later the butcher mysteriously died. Evidence was found clearing the Jews of all his charges. The Jews were allowed to return to Judaism, and with grateful joy they instituted this special Purim.

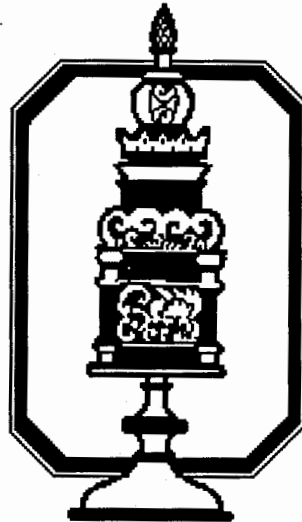
1524, Purim of Cairo. In this year, the Egyptian governor imprisoned a dozen leading Jews in order to extort money

from the Jewish community. One day he promised to massacre all of Cairo's Jews right after his bath. However, during that bath he was stabbed by a subordinate and the Jews escaped.

1541, Purim Edom. Charles V attacked Algiers. But legend says that due to the prayers of Rabbi Duran, a storm destroyed the Spanish fleet, and the Jews escaped the fanaticism of the Spaniards.

1595, Purim of Chios (Also called Purim *de la Senora*, "of the Good Lady"). 500 Spanish soldiers invaded the island of Chios to take it from the Turks. A good Jewish housewife in putting her bread in the oven accidentally rested the glowing end of her shard near a cannon. It discharged and at its sound the Turks routed the enemy.

1615, Purim of Frankfort. A local baker pronounced himself to be "a new Haman," and organized an attack against the Jews. Though the Jews fought, they were driven out of town. The German ruler of that area heard about this, asked the Jews to return, welcomed them back with a band, and hanged the baker.



1623, Curtain Purim. A Jewish man, Moses Altschul, returned to the authorities some curtains a fellow Jew had bought from soldiers. He had learned that they were stolen from the Governor's palace in Prague. He refused to hand over his fellow Jew, and so was himself arrested and condemned to death. He escaped with a fine, however, and instituted this family Purim.

1840, Purim of Rhodes. Some Greek sponge traders were angry with their Jewish competitors and caused the disappearance of a Greek child. They blamed the Jews, and many were imprisoned and tortured. The child was later found alive on another island. The Sultan deposed the Rhodes governor and issued a decree freeing the Jews of the charge of ritual murder. The day of the decree fell exactly on Purim (Adar 14) so they celebrated a double Purim thereafter.

Excursus 2: Finding "God" in Esther

In his commentary, Matthew Henry states rightly that "If the Name of *God* is not there in Esther, His finger is." However, the fact that the Name of *God* is not mentioned specifically in Esther has puzzled many people, theologians and laymen alike. This need not be so. *God* is found all over in Esther if a person wants to find Him. Carl Amerding gives this pertinent quote from *The Pulpit Commentary*. "No disbeliever in *God* could have written it; and no believer in *God* can read it without finding his faith strengthened thereby. (11)

In Esther 2:16, the tenth month, Tebeth is mentioned; the only time in the Hebrew Scriptures. The question would be, "the tenth month from what?" The answer in turn would be, "from the first month of our year when we celebrate Passover, the anniversary of our deliverance by *God* from bondage in Egypt."

In Esther 3:4, Mordecai is called a "Jew." A Jew by definition is a person of Judah, and Judah means "One who praises *God*."

In Esther 4:14, Mordecai tells Esther that if she won't act, then deliverance will arise for the Jews "from another quarter." In context, that "other quarter," the place or person can only mean *God* Himself.

In Esther 4:16, Esther asks that all the Jews in Shushan fast for her for three days. The commentary of Keil and Delitzsch indicates that fasting was always accompanied by prayer.(12) Prayer for Jew could only be to *God*.

In Esther 6:13 Zeresh, the wife of Haman, tells her husband that if Mordecai is of the Jewish people, he will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him. Did she know about the true *God* who empowered the Jewish people?

Another consideration is the concern of the Jews that this book would be translated into Persian. When this was done, the translators would most likely put the names of their false gods in place of the Name of *God*. This would be totally unacceptable to the Jews. It would therefore be simpler not to use *God's* Name at all in such a work.

Ruth (Specter) Lascelle, in her book, *Jewish Faith and the New Covenant*, has this excellent footnote:

"Of all the books of the Old Testament there is none which has more of *God* in it than the Book of Esther, yet *God* is not once mentioned... The best known fact about the Book of Esther, the 'fact' that the Name of *God* is not 'even once named in this book' is not a fact at all! The Name Yahweh, or Jehovah (YHWH יהוה) appears five times concealed in the original Hebrew in marvelous acrostic form! One cannot expect to find these Names in any translation, for acrostics cannot be translated." (13)

The acrostic, taken from an appendix of Lascelle's book is given here:

In the ancient Hebrew text of the Book of Esther, the Sacred Tetragrammaton (YHWH יהוה) is hidden five times in acrostic form. A sixth acrostic is the Name Ehyeh (אהיה) -- I AM. In three of the ancient manuscripts, these letters of the acrostic are written larger than the rest of the text so as to stand out boldly on the scroll.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
את־וּשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי וְלֹא־בֹאֶהָ
1:17 ..."Vashti the queen to be brought in before him and she would not come."

→ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
הֵיאֵל כָּל הַנְּשִׁים יַחְנֹן
1:20 "all the wives shall give..."

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֵּן הַיּוֹם
5:4 "Let the king and Haman come this day."

→ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
וְכִלְזָה אֵין שׁוֹה לִי
5:13 "This availeth me nothing."

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
כִּי־כִלְתָּהּ אֵלֶיךָ הָרַעָה
7:7 "That there was evil determined against him."

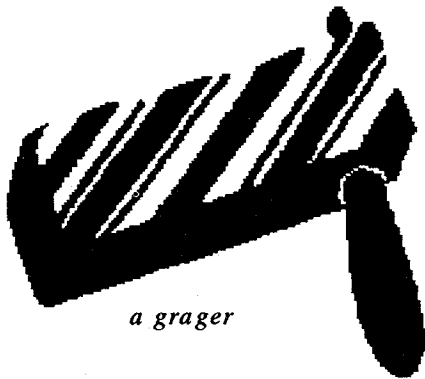
→ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
מִי הוּא זֶה רֵא יֵזֶה הוּא
7:5 "Who is he and where is he?"

In addition, the Aleph-Tau [את] combination, also one of the Divine Names is found 100 times in the Book of Esther! (14)

Conclusion: How the Jewish People Celebrate Purim Today

Ta'anit Esther is the Fast of Esther, observed usually on the 13th of Adar. (If the 13th falls on a Friday or Saturday the fast is observed on the Thursday before.) Normally fasts that fall on the Sabbath are postponed to the following day, but Ta'anit Esther is the only Jewish fast that commemorates good news instead of bad. Therefore, it is not desirable to delay it but to hasten it. The fast honors Queen Esther's fast (Esther 4:16).

The evening (beginning) of the 14th of Adar, after three stars are seen, Jews gather for the public reading of the *Megillah* -- the scroll of Esther. Four other books are called *Megillot* (scrolls): Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations. However, Esther is *THE MEGILLAH* par excellence! All must hear the reading, especially women, since the story tells about women playing a vital role in rescuing Jews. This public reading comes as a part of the evening synagogue service. It may be read at home for those who are unable to attend synagogue. It should be read in Hebrew, if possible; in a special melodic pattern, and it is encouraged that it be read in a comical way, as well. It is the custom to spread out the whole scroll before the reading, as if it were a dispatch that has just been received minutes before.



a grager

The custom is to boo, hiss, shout, stamp the feet, and sound noisemakers called gragers to drown out Haman's name every time it is read. The Bible instructs the Jews to wipe out the memory of the Amalekites. They shout "*y'mach shmo!*" --let his name be blotted out. Haman's name may be written on two stones that are banged together, or written on the soles of shoes so that his name is stamped out. In addition to the gragers, the children are often given toy pistols to shoot at

the mention of Haman's name. Most participants follow in their own scroll, reading along in a murmured undertone, and then loudly repeat certain verses along with the reader. The names of Haman's ten sons in Esther 9:7-9 are spoken by all in one breath. The reason is to avoid gloating over their fate, and to hurry piously over their destruction without lingering. This is reminiscent of the Passover seder, when the plagues are enumerated. There drops of wine are taken from the full cup so as to diminish the joy of the Exodus and not gloat over the fate of the Egyptians.

There is also great cheering whenever Mordecai's name is mentioned. Cries of *Baruch Mordecai*-- bless Mordecai-- are heard. Many of these practices developed to help keep the children awake and interested in the long proceedings.

The following morning another service is held and the entire *Megillah* is read again. This practice of reading the lengthy *Megillah* again gives rise to the popular Jewish phrase "the whole *Megillah*," which reflects a long and involved process. Three special Purim blessings are recited before the reading as they were the evening before. The whole service is included in the worship section of this work. The Scripture portion, Ex. 17:8-16, is read, reminding the community of Amalek and the genealogy of Haman. Readings from Deuteronomy 25 and 1 Samuel 15 are read on the preceding Sabbath, as a further reminder of Haman's pedigree.

In the late afternoon of the 14th, and going on into the evening of the 15th, the Purim feast, *seduah*, is held. Special table hymns are recited during the long festive meal and celebration. There may be skits, plays, games, poems, humorous readings and other joyful activities. Purim parties are often held with masks and costumes, and maybe even Haman hanged in effigy. A king may be elected to reign over the festivities. Special foods like *hamantaschen* are prepared.

The *Ad-Lo-Yada*. In the Talmud (*Megillah* 7b) a rabbi states that a man is duty bound to be so happy on Purim (mellow himself with wine) till he *knows not* (*ad-lo-yada*) whether to curse Haman and bless Mordecai, or the reverse. This encouragement to excessive drinking on Purim has been hotly debated over the centuries. In the State of Israel the phrase designates

not drinking to excess, but the spirit of carnival with masquerades, huge parades, balls, plays and festivities, which are all the order of the day. The most famous *ad-lo-yada* parade takes place every year in Tel Aviv. These celebrations often last until dawn.(15)

The sending of gifts (*Mishloah Manot*) is an important parts of Purim. A Jewish saying is that "Joy is a twin; to be happy, we must

make others happy." Since the word *manot*, or gifts, is plural, traditional interpretation rules that at least two gifts must be given. Often they consist of Purim delicacies of pastries, fruit, nuts, or wine, along with gifts of money for the poor. To train the youth to be generous, they are assigned the task of carrying the gifts from giver to recipient. However, they often get tips for carrying out these duties, and so they get some training in greed too!



FOOTNOTES ON PURIM

1. Purim is celebrated on the 14th and 15th day of Adar, the twelfth month of the Jewish calendar. As such, it precedes Passover in the first month of Nisan, much as Mardi Gras precedes Lent. Because the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle, frequent leap years include an extra month which is called a "Second Adar." In leap years Purim is celebrated on the 14th of Adar II, while the corresponding days of Adar I are called Purim *Katah* (Hebrew for minor, or small Purim). Purim katah is not marked by any celebration, but fasting and funerals are forbidden. The 15th of Adar (or Adar II:15 in leap years) is called Shushan Purim. It is observed as a second day of celebration because the Jews were given an extra day in Shushan to rout their enemies. Shushan Purim is not marked by any special services, but serves as a time frame into which the festivities of the 14th may overflow.

According to the Midrash, Haman chose Adar as the month to kill the Jews because of its zodiacal sign, Pisces (fish). He was thinking along the lines of the words in Jeremiah 16:16: "Israel will be caught like a fish in a net." According to the Book of Esther, the month of Adar was chosen by Haman purely by casting the lot (*pur*).

Each of the 12 months in the Jewish Calendar is assigned to one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Adar is Joseph's month. Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and each one became a full tribe in Israel. Similarly, Adar becomes two full months in leap years. The rabbis have found many parallels between the Joseph and Esther stories. For example, Joseph gave two banquets for his brothers, and Esther gave two banquets. Other similarities are noted in each of the seven lessons.

2. Victor Buksbazen. *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*. Ft. Washington PA, 1954. p. 67.

3. Carl Amerding. *Esther -- For Such a Time as This*. Chicago IL, 1955. p. 14.

4. Buksbazen. p. 71.

5. John C. Whitcomb. *Esther: The Triumph of God's Sovereignty*. Chicago, IL, Moody Press, 1979. p. 80.

6. Buksbazen. p. 74.

7. Dr. Isidor Margolis & Rabbi Sidney L. Markowitz. *Jewish Holidays and Festivals*. New York. The Citadel Press, 1962. p. 75.

8. Hayyim Schauss. *The Jewish Festivals*. New York. Schocken Books, 1962. p. 254.

9. Rabbi Moris Silverman, Compiler. *The Complete Purim Service*. Bridgeport, CT. The Prayer Book Press of Media Judaica, Inc., 1947, 1981. p. 48.

10. R. Laird Harris, Ed. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Vol. 2. Chicago, IL. Moody Press, 1980. p. 931

11. Amerding. p. 9.

12. C.F. Keil, *Volume III, Esther (1 Kings through Esther), Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*. (Trans. Sophia Taylor). Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. p. 317.

13. Ruth Specter Lascelle. *Jewish Faith and the New Covenant*. Seattle, WA. Bedrock Press, 1980. p. 244.

14. Lascelle. p. 403.

15. Rabbi S. M. Lehrman. *A Guide to Hanukkah and Purim*. London. Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1962. p. 73.

Appendix A:

PASSOVER SEDER

THE PASSOVER SEDER WHICH OUR LORD CELEBRATED WITH HIS DISCIPLES ON THE SAME NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS BETRAYED.

This haggadah (order of service), compiled by David J. Born, is intended for use by congregations who believe in Jesus as God's Son, their Savior, and want to recall the deep and meaningful traditions of the Jewish Passover as Jesus Himself did. During the meal, the body and blood of Jesus will be offered just as He offered it to His disciples at the Last Supper. Participants need to be aware that the real presence of our Lord Jesus is contained in the elements of bread and wine. Throughout this seder, the Hebrew name for Jesus, Yeshua, may be used in substitution. Translations of Hebrew chants are provided on the right side of the page. These may be read in place of the Hebrew.

INTRODUCTION

Cantor: We are gathered about this table as a family. We recall in this seder the events of the past in which God our Father acted to free us from bondage.

Family: As God freed Israel from slavery to Egypt, so He liberated all people from the bondage of sin, that all creation may celebrate the Passover together as the new Israel.

Cantor: The Scripture states that we should observe the Passover for all times, that we might tell our children of how the Lord brought us forth out of slavery. As the Lord's family, we pray together:

All: Lord God of our Fathers, Father of Jesus our Messiah, we thank you for your saving acts. As your anointed has come to die in our place as a fitting sacrifice for our sins, and to rise again as the First-born of your new creation; so we set this place for you in our minds. Come, celebrate the Passover with us; be with us as we proclaim the freedom from slavery and sin bought with the price of the blood of your First-born Son. Amen.

[all rise]

1. KIDDUSH קִדּוּשׁ

Blessing the First Cup

Woman: Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
ha-o-LAM, a-SHER kid-
SHA-noo l'had-LEEK ner
shel yom TOV.

Blessed are You, Lord our
God, King of the Universe,
who has blessed us with
Your commandments and
directed us to light the holy
day light.

Cantor: Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
ha-o-LAM, sh'he-che-YO-
noo v'ki-MO-noo v'hi-gi-
O-noo la-z'MAHN ha-ZEH.

Blessed are You, Lord our
God, King of the Universe,
You gave us life, you kept
us safe and brought us to
this holy Season.

Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
ha-o-LAM, bo-Ray p'ree
ha-GO-fen.

Blessed are You, Lord our
God, King of the Universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
 el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
 ha-o-LAM a-SHER ba-CHOR
 BO-noo mee-KAL ahm.
 V'ro-m'MA-noo mee-KAL
 la-SHON. V'keed-SHA-noo
 ba-MITZ-vo-sov. V'TEE-
 ten LA-noo, a-doh-NOI
 el-o-HAY-noo,
 b'ah-ha-VOH mo-ah-DEEM
 I'sim-CHAH cha-GEEM oo-
 z'ma-NEEM I'so-SOHN eth
 yom chag ha-mat-ZOTH
 ha-ZEH, z'man chai-roo-
 SAY-noo, mee-KRAH ko-
 DESH, zay-KEHR lee-TZE-
 ahs mitz-rai-YEEM. Kee
 VA-noo va-CHAR-tah,
 v'oh-TA-noo kee-DASH-to
 mee-KOHL ha-ah-MEEM,
 oo-moh-a-DAY, kod-SHE-
 chah ba-sim-CHAH oov-
 soh-sohn hee-chal-T'NOO.

Blessed are You, Lord our
 God, King of the Universe,
 who has chosen us and
 led us out from all people
 by blessing us with Your
 commandments. Lord, Our
 God, out of love You gave
 us festivals for happiness
 holy days and seasons of
 rejoicing. You gave us the
 Feast of Unleavened Bread,
 the season of our freedom:
 this holy assembly called
 together to remember the
 Exodus from Egypt. You
 have chosen us for Your
 service, making us holy
 among all peoples and giv-
 ing us holy days for re-
 joicing and happiness.

Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
 m'KAY-desh YIS-roy-el
 v'ha-z'ma-NEEM.

Blessed are You, Lord, who
 blesses Israel and the
 festivals!

Elder 1: I'CHAIM! [all drink some wine]

To life! [all are seated]



2. URCHATZ יְרַחֵץ *Hand Washing*

Elder 2: The next ceremony of the Seder is known as the Urchatz, "washing of the hands." This is symbolic of purification which reminds us of our preparation for this service by our baptism. The ritual is performed after the family reads together the account of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet.

Family: After He had washed His disciples' feet, Jesus turned to His place at the table and said to them: "Do you know what I have just done for you? You call me teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do, because I am. I am your Lord and Teacher and have just washed your feet! You then, should wash each other's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. I tell you the truth; no slave is greater than his master; no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. Now you know this truth; you will truly be happy if you put it into practice!"

[Each person pours water over his neighbor's hands into a bowl, and the neighbor reciprocates.]

3. KARPAS כרפס *Green Vegetable*

Elder 3: The green vegetable or Karpas has always been a symbol of the lush and abundant life created by God for the enjoyment of His people. The crisp, refreshing greens eaten at Passover are reminders of the new life we have of freedom from slavery to sin and death. Passover is a spring festival, running back to back with the Festival of First Fruits. As such, the green vegetable is a sign of hope and new life even in this world. As the dullness of winter bursts into a lively green, so spiritual refreshment is ours as a gift of God.

Family: In partaking of this green fruit of the earth, we give thanks to God for all His gifts. We recall that our forefathers in faith were tillers of the soil, who were ever grateful in the faithful produce of the earth. In tasting the salt water, we also are asked to remember the tears which were shed during the tortures of slavery. Our Lord is a God who delivers His people with a mighty hand and puts His Holy Spirit into them that they might bear good fruit for His kingdom. Bless the Lord who turns tears of sorrow into tears of joy!

Cantor: Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
ha-o-LAM, bo-RAY p'ree
ha-ah-do-MOH.

Blessed are You, Lord our
God, King of the Universe,
Creator of the produce of
the earth.



4. YACHATZ יחצ' *Dividing the Matzoh*

Elder 4: Traditionally, three loaves of unleavened bread are on the Passover table, bound together in a cloth. Some rabbis taught that the three matzohs represent the two levels of the universe, heaven and earth, with the middle matzoh representing some communication between the two. Jacob's vision of the ladder also showed such a bridge between God and man, and Jesus told Nathaniel that he would see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Thus Jesus, the Son of Man, is our mediator through whom we have access to God. At the Seder, we break a piece off the middle matzoh and hide it until after the meal. If we think of this matzoh as Jesus, then we see new meaning in this custom: he was broken and taken from us, and on the third day returned in great glory.

Family: As Messiah's body was broken for our offenses, so we break the middle matzoh. In one sense He is always with us even today, in another He is partly hidden as He goes before us to prepare a place for us in God's rest. One part of the matzoh remains with us, while the other is hidden -- to be sought and found by children, His most humble people.

[The matzoh is broken, and part, called the Afikomen, is hidden.]

5. MAGEED מַגֵּעֵד *The Passover Story*

Cantor: Ha LAH-ma, ha LAH-ma AN-ya
di ah-HA-loo, ah-HA-loo av-
ha-ta-NAH b'AR-ah d'MITZ-
rai-yeem. B'AR-ah, b'AR-ah
d'MITZ-rai-yeem.

Kol DIH-fin ye-TE v'YE-chol,
kol ditz reech ye-TE
v'yif-SACH. Ha-sha-TAH
ha-CHAH l'sha-NA
ha-BAH b'ar-AH d'TZEE-on.
Ha-sha-TAH av-DE l'sha-NA
ha-BA b'NE cho-RIN.

This is the bread of
affliction that our
fathers ate in the
land of Egypt.

Whoever is hungry, let
let him come and eat!
Whoever is needy, let
him come and celebrate
Passover with us! Now
we are here; next year
may we be in Zion. Now
we are slaves; next
year may we be free.

[A time of free prayer, beginning with a prayer for the peace of God's people.]

The Four Questions

- Child:** Why is this night of Passover different from all other nights of the year? On all other nights we eat leavened bread, but on this night we eat only matzoh. On all other nights we eat all kinds of seasonings, but tonight we eat only moror. On all other nights we do not dip our foods in anything, yet tonight we dip twice. On all other nights we all eat on a different schedule, often in haste, but tonight we enjoy a lengthy meal together with our whole family.
- Elder 1:** We shall now answer the four questions.
- Elder 2:** Once we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord in His goodness and mercy brought us forth from that land with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Once we were slaves to the flesh, but the Lord rescued us from ourselves to be His children.
- Elder 3:** Had He not rescued us from the hand of evil oppression, surely we and our children would still be slaves of sin.
- Elder 4:** We therefore gather year after year to retell this ancient story. For in reality, it is not ancient, but eternal in its message. The Lord still frees us from bondage each day.
- Elder 1:** The first question asked concerns the use of the maztoh. We eat these unleavened cakes to remember that our ancestors, in their haste to leave Egypt, could not wait for breads to rise, and so removed them from the ovens while still flat. Leaven has become a symbol of sin: only a very few grains are needed to puff up an entire person with pride and selfishness. We cleanse ourselves of the leaven of unrighteousness in remembrance of the Passover Sacrifice who frees us from the bondage of sin.
- Elder 2:** We partake of the moror on this night that we might taste of the bitterness of slavery, even as Messiah tasted the bitter gall on the cross, as He died to set us free.
- Elder 3:** In answer to the third question, we dip twice in the Seder, first greens in salt water to replace the tears of sin and death with tears of joy at the prospect of new life, symbolized by the spring greens. Later we will dip the bitter moror in

charoseth, the sweet cement that binds us together in the body of Yeshua. For the bitterness of the cross, the blood of Messiah turns sweet as wine in our mouths as we taste of His undying love for us.

Elder 4: The fourth question asks why, on this night, we eat together and are relaxed. In ancient times, to eat relaxed was a sign of a free man. And as free people under the love of God, we are knit together as a family. For our forefathers did not eat with strangers and foreigners, but with the family they loved the most. So we are one family, gathered together in the love of God our Father.

The Four Sons and the Parable of the Sower

Cantor: God's relationship with each of His people is unique and individual, and each person has a free will to respond, or not respond, as he pleases. The four sons are typical children who vary in their desire and ability to value the Passover observance. Likewise in our own case, we have a free will to regard or neglect the Word of God.

Elder 1: The first son is the wise and obedient son. He is like the good ground which receives the Word of God like good seed to be cherished and nurtured into fruition.

Elder 2: The second son is contrary. He excludes himself from the celebration by asking what the meaning of this celebration is for others, but is not interested in how it applies to himself. Some seed will fall on hard ground, but God can soften such hard-heartedness. Such a son cannot know what joy there is in being a child of God. He is in need of our prayers.

Elder 3: The third son is the simple son. He is not unwilling to understand the deep meaning of God's loving actions in history, but is unable. This son is like the rocky ground that will not allow much depth for growth; he will sit down at the Passover table and simply ask "*Ha-ZEH*" (what is all this?). Nevertheless, Messiah taught that it is not with the deep understanding of the theologians, but with simple child-like faith that we must enter the Kingdom of God.

Elder 4: The fourth son is unable to ask. He has no understanding of the importance of God's love and blessing at all. With such a child, the father must take the initiative to tell of how God delivers His people from bondage. Many innocent souls are lost in this world because the pleasures and cares of the flesh have entirely diverted their interest from God's truth. The sower must take pains to get the attention of such people who would not think to come and ask of their own free will.

The Lord's Promise *[all rise]*

Cantor: Blessed is God who fulfills His promises, Who is ever faithful to His servants, who trust in Him!

Family: The Lord foretold the events of Israel's bondage, when telling Abraham the future of his children.

Cantor: Then did He describe the years of their service on foreign soil, threatened by a strange and hostile people.

Family: But it was then that He did also promise to rescue and redeem them in justice, bringing judgment upon the oppressor.

Cantor: Great has been the Lord's divine promise, source of hope to a stricken and fear-filled people.

Family: In every age, oppressors have risen against us to crush our spirit and our hope. But from the hands of all who threatened us, the Lord has rescued and restored His people.

Cantor: Not in Egypt alone have God's people faced death and extinction.

Family: In many lands and many times, the people of God have suffered and faced death because they trusted in Him.

Cantor: In all these crises, God's help and guidance assured our survival.

Family: Our hope in the Lord is strong. In His unshakable love is our faith.

[all are seated]

The Passover Text

Lector 1 Exodus 12: 1-36
Lector 2 Luke 22:7-22

The Plagues and the Promise

Cantor: When men defy the will of God, they bring pain and suffering upon themselves. God's will is that all men should love Him and come to Him, but for those who do not respond to His calling, there is separation, dejection and self-destruction.

[As each plague is enumerated, a drop of wine is taken from the cup and put on the plate with a finger.]

Family: When Pharaoh defied the command of God to release Israel, he invited adversity upon himself and his people. Ten plagues were visited upon the Egyptians:

<i>DOM</i>	1. Blood
<i>tz'far-DAY-ah</i>	2. Frogs
<i>kin-NAI'm</i>	3. Lice
<i>ah-DOV</i>	4. Flies
<i>d'VER</i>	5. Cattle Disease
<i>sch-CHEEN</i>	6. Boils
<i>ba-RATH</i>	7. Hail
<i>ar-BEH</i>	8. Locusts
<i>CHOH-shech</i>	9. Darkness
<i>ma-KATH b'ko-ROTH</i>	10. Slaying of the first born

Cantor: Even though this was their own fault, still we do not rejoice over the downfall of the Egyptians. We regard all men as creations of God, even our enemies. They are sinners no more than we.

Family: As it took the suffering of Egypt culminating in darkness and the death of their first-born sons to pay the price for our freedom from slavery, so it took the death of God's First-born at a dark hour to pay the price for our atonement, once and for all.

Cantor: To drink a full cup of wine is a symbol of joy. Though we celebrate our escape from the angel of death, it was at the expense of the Messiah's life, whose blood is like a sign on the door posts of our hearts. We therefore diminish the wine in our cups as we recall the price for disobedience paid by the Egyptians: death.

Family: This is the same price paid by the Redeemer, blessed be He, in our place: drops of blood shed that we might gratefully go free.

Dayaynoo [It would have been enough]

Cantor: *EE-loo EE-loo ho-tzee-AH-noo
ho-tzee-AH-noo me-mitz-RAI-
yeem, v'lo oh-SOH vo-HAIM
sh'fa-TEEM, da-YAY-noo!* Had the Lord brought us
out of the land of Egypt
and not passed sentence
on its people, it would
have been enough!

[CHORUS]

Family: *Da-da-YAY-noo, da-da-YAY-noo
da-da-YAY-noo, da-YAY-noo,
da-YAY-noo! (Da-YAY-noo) [repeat]* It would have been more
than enough!

Cantor: Had the Lord passed sentence on the land of Egypt, our oppressors, and not given us their treasures, *da-YAY-noo*.

Family: [Chorus]

Cantor: Had the Lord protected us and led us through the sea on dry land, and not given us their treasures, *da-YAY-noo*.

Family: [Chorus]

Cantor: Had the Lord God brought us safely through our wand'rings in the desert, and given us no bread, no sabbath, *da-YAY-noo*.

Family: [Chorus]

Cantor: Had the Lord God given to us His laws written in the Torah, and not promised a messiah, *da-YAY-noo*.

Family: [Chorus]

Cantor: But He did, He gave the promise of Messiah, and He kept it, in Yeshua, blessed be He, *hal-le-LU!*

Family: *Hal-le-LU-jah! Hal-le-LU-jah!
Hal-le-LU-jah! Hal-LE-lu,
Hal-LE-LU! (Hal-LE-lu) [repeat]* Praise God!

Cantor: *EE-loo EE-loo NA-tan LA-noo
NA-tan LA-noo eth ma-SHEE-ah.
Ha-ma-SHEE-ah NA-tan LA-noo,
da-YAY-noo!* He gave the Messiah to
us! It is more than
enough!

Family: *Da-da-YAY-noo, hal-le-LU-jah!
Da-da-YAY-noo, da-YAY-noo,
da-YAY-noo! (Da-YAY-noo) [repeat]* More than enough!
Praise God!

The Three Symbols

- Elder 1:* Rabbi Gamaliel, the teacher of Rav. Shaul (the Apostle Paul) taught that it is our duty to mention the three symbols at Passover: the Passover sacrifice or Paschal Lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs.
- Elder 2:* [*pointing to the shankbone*] Why was the Paschal Lamb eaten which is represented by this shankbone? It reminds us of the blood of the lamb on the door posts, which protected us from the slaying of the first-born that overtook the Egyptians. Even so, the Messiah is our Paschal Lamb, the sacrifice for our sins; the one through whom we avert the judgment of God.
- Elder 3:* [*holding up the matzoh*] Unleavened bread recalls that our ancestors left Egypt in haste. The dough had no time to rise. As Scripture says, "purge out the old leaven of malice and replace it with the love and sincerity." In our lives where we have so little time to do anything, let us haste to give the Lord first place in all that we do.
- Elder 4:* [*pointing to the bitter herbs*] Bitter herbs recall the bitterness of slavery in Egypt, as Scripture says: "They made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and brick and labor in the fields." We are also reminded of the bitterness of life when we are out of fellowship with Messiah.

The Undying Message of this Night

- Family:* In every generation it is each person's duty to look upon himself as if he personally had come out of Egypt. It was not only our fore-fathers whom God saved; He saved us too by the blood of the Lamb. For it is written: "He took us out of there so that He might bring us home and give us what He had promised to our fathers."

Hallelujah Psalms (113-114) [*all rise*]

- Cantor:* Praise the Lord, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore.
- Family:* From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is exalted over all the nations, His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?
- Cantor:* He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes, He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the Lord!
- Family:* When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel His dominion. The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back; the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.
- Cantor:* Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back, you mountains, that you skipped like rams, you hills, like lambs?
- Family:* Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water, Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!

The Second Cup

Cantor: *[wine cups raised]* Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who redeemed us and ransomed our ancestors from slavery and enabled us to reach this night in which we may celebrate our victory in our God.

Family: So, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, bring us also to future festivals in peace, gladdened in the rebuilding of Your holy city, and joyful at Your service. There we shall eat of the offerings and the Paschal sacrifice whose blood gains upon Your altar gracious acceptance. There we shall sing a new song of praise to You for our redemption and for the liberation of our souls.

Cantor: *Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI* Blessed are You, O Lord who
ga-AHL yis-roy-AIL. is the Redeemer of Israel.

Cantor: *Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI* Blessed are You, Lord our
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech God, King of the Universe,
ha-o-LAM, bo-Ray p'ree Creator of the fruit of
ha-GO-fen. AH-mayn. the vine. Amen.

Family: *L'tho-NOI* To the Lord!

[all drink wine a second time] [all are seated]



6. RACHTZAH רחצה *Washing the Hands*

Elder 1: Washing was a ceremonial ritual in Israel, as was practiced near the beginning of tonight's observance. Here, just before dinner, common ideas of cleanliness would dictate a second washing of one's hands.

Elder 2: By Jesus' time, even such ordinary practices had become codified as "traditions of the elders." When the teachers of the law observed that Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands before eating, they criticized Him for not teaching them such traditions.

Elder 3: Jesus replied that it is not what goes into a man that makes him unclean, but what comes out of him in terms of words and deeds.

Elder 4: Thankful for our cleansing by Jesus' blood, within and without, we recall our cleansing now as we wash our hands once more.

[each person dips his fingers in the water bowls]

7. MOTZEE מוציא *Brings Forth Bread*

Elder 1: When Jesus saw the need to feed five thousand people with five loaves of bread, He did not pause to consider the impossibility of such a situation. Rather He went ahead and blessed the bread as any good son of Israel would do before supper. This standard blessing said before any meal blesses God who brings forth bread to feed His people.

Elder 2: As Jesus gave thanks to His Father in heaven, and broke the five loaves, the bread was sufficient to feed all who were present. We can trust our Lord who clothes lilies in the field and showers manna in the wilderness to care for our every need as well.

Elder 3: Later, when we receive the bread consecrated by Jesus as His own body, broken for us, we know that He continues to be our bread of life which will suffice for us to this day.

Elder 4: More than sufficient to meet our spiritual and physical needs, Jesus gives us the gift of Himself overflowing with grace and mercy to fill us with the good things of His kingdom. Let us bless the Lord for daily bread, and all good things we receive from His hand of bounty.

<i>Cantor:</i>	<i>Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech ha-o-LAM, ha-MOT-tzee LE-chem min ha-AR-retz. AH-mayn.</i>	Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth. Amen
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8. MATZOH מצה *Unleavened Bread*

Elder 1: At this point in the seder, the top and remaining half of the middle matzoh are broken and eaten. These fragments of unleavened bread may be dipped in salt, which is a sign of God's covenant.

Elder 2: Leaven in bread (called "Chumutz") is a symbol of sin, because as it only takes a few tiny grains to puff up a loaf of bread, so it takes only a little pride or other sin to puff us up and completely alter our appearance before the Lord.

Elder 3: Unleavened bread is doubly important at Passover, because as we have seen, it recalls how the Israelites had to leave Egypt in haste. As such, it reminds us of the pressures and rigors of this world which can only be confidently faced with God's help.

Elder 4: Previously, bread was blessed in the usual manner, but because matzoh is more than a substitute for regular bread, but is a symbol of rest we have from the slavery to sin and the pressures of every day life in the world, it epitomizes the theme of Passover. Therefore, a special blessing is said over the matzoh at this point in the seder to underscore the importance of this symbol.

<i>Cantor:</i>	<i>Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech ha-o-LAM, a-SHER kid- SHA-noo b'metz-vo-SOV v'TZEE-vo-noo al a-CHEE- las mot-TZOH.</i>	Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe who has blessed us with Your commandments and directed us to eat unleavened bread.
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[the top and half of the middle matzoh is eaten]

9. MAROR מרור *Bitter Herb*

Elder 1: We now partake of the maror, or bitter herbs, which we shall dip in the "charoseth," or sweet mortar. Thus we remember how bitter is slavery to sin and death, its consequence. But God's redemption is in Jesus' bitter agony and death: this has sweetened our lot. Though wracked with the bitterness of sin, we are forgiven and made right with the Father through Messiah. In Him we may offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices to further the work of the Father's kingdom.

Cantor: Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
ha-o-LAM, a-SHER kid-
SHA-noo b'meetz-vo-SOV
v'TZEE-vo-noo al a-CHEE-
las mar-ROR.

Blessed are You, Lord our
God, King of the Universe
who has blessed us with
Your commandments and dir-
ected us to eat bitter
herbs.

[some horseradish is eaten with mortar]



10. KORECH כּוֹרֵךְ *Combining the Symbols*

Elder 2: Just before the birth of Jesus, Hillel observed the command to eat the meal with matzoh and bitter herbs. He combined them as we do now. The charoseth reminds us of mortar, binding the bitterness of slavery and the bread of freedom into a tension which only Jesus can resolve in His peace and righteousness. This He offers to all, even as He offered it to Judas the night he was betrayed.

[the bottom matzoh is broken in two to make "Hillel's sandwich"]



11. SHULCHAN ORECH שְׁלַחַן אוֹרֵךְ *Festival Meal*

[optional address to the family]
[dinner is then served]

[The first course is a meat dish in commemoration of the offerings in temple times. The second course is an egg dipped in salt water, which is symbolic of mourners desiring to be redeemed by God.]

12. TZAFUN צפון "Dessert"

[Children look for the hidden afikomen and bring it to the head table in exchange for a prize]

Elder 3: We now take the *afikomen*, or dessert matzoh, which has been hidden, for the final course of the dinner. We realize that it was at this point in the Last Supper that Jesus celebrated with His disciples that He said of this matzoh "This is my body."

Elder 4: As this part of the middle matzoh was hidden in a cloth and found again, so the body of Jesus, our mediator, was broken, shrouded and hidden in the tomb for three days. It was with great joy that His disciples found Him to be alive again, and it is with the same joy that we now receive His body in faith that He still lives today in us. Jesus is truly present in this bread which He proclaims is His body, and as we receive it we become a part of His body in the world today.

[all rise]

Cantor: Our Lord and Messiah, Jesus, in the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread. And when He had given thanks, saying:

<i>Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI</i>	Blessed are You, Lord our
<i>el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech</i>	God, King of the Universe,
<i>ha-o-LAM, ha-MOT-tzee</i>	Who brings forth bread
<i>LE-chem min ha-AR-retz. AH-mayn.</i>	from the earth. Amen.

He broke the bread and gave it to His disciples with the words: take and eat, this is my body which is given for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.

[the afikomen is broken and distributed to those who may appropriately commune.]



13. BORECH בָּרַךְ Thanksgiving

Cantor: When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.

Family: Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

Cantor: The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Family: Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the desert. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy!

Cantor: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who nourishes the entire world in His goodness with grace, with loving kindness, and with mercy.

Family: We give You thanks, O Lord our God, because You have given to our forefathers as an heritage a desirable, good and spacious land. We thank You that You sent Your Son ahead of us to prepare for us an eternal place in Your kingdom. Because You removed us, Lord our God, from the place of slavery and redeemed us with the price of blood, Your covenant with us is eternally secure.

Cantor: Have mercy, Lord our God, on Your people Israel; on Zion the resting place of Your glory. May all who celebrate this Passover recognize their need to know you personally and to worship You in Spirit and in truth. Hasten the time when all your people will acknowledge the salvation You won for us through Messiah Jesus.

Family: By the presence of Your Holy Spirit, O Lord, you have sanctified us to be the temple wherein You dwell. Knit us together as living stones bound together with the sweet mortar of Your love and grace, that we might raise a voice of praise to you that resounds throughout the earth. Amen.

The Third Cup

Elder 1: The third cup of the seder is traditionally known as the cup of redemption. As the shoulder of the paschal lamb was eaten last to remember that God redeemed with an outstretched arm, so the meal closes with a cup of redemption.

Elder 2: It was this cup, after supper, that Jesus took and blessed as the new covenant in His blood. Since it is Jesus' blood which was poured out for us when He stretched out His arms on the cross to redeem us, it was most fitting that He consecrated this particular cup to be His blood which seals our redemption.

Cantor: Our Lord, Messiah Jesus, took the cup after supper and gave thanks, saying:

*Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech
ha-o-LAM, bo-Ray p'ree
ha-GO-fen. AH-mayn.*

Blessed are You, Lord our
God, King of the Universe,
Creator of the fruit of
the vine. Amen.

He gave it to His disciples with the words: Drink of it, all of you. This is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[The cup is passed to those who may appropriately commune.]

The Cup of Elijah

Elder 3: The Hebrew Scriptures close with the promise that Elijah will return as a forerunner of the messianic age. This promise is taken very seriously by the devout in Israel. Jewish legends recall the mystical appearance of Elijah in times of trouble, to point the way to relief and redemption to be found in Messiah.

Family: We cry out for deliverance from our sin every day. Perhaps Elijah will come to save us!

Elder 4: The message of repentance which Elijah spoke came in John the Baptist as a forerunner of Jesus, and Elijah stood with Moses on Transfiguration to proclaim Jesus as God's anointed. Elijah has prepared the way for the Messiah. The Messiah has come to save us. So lift up your hearts; your redemption is at hand!

Cantor: The fourth cup is poured, but before it is blessed, a door to the outside is opened for Elijah as a testimony to Israel's faith that Messiah is still coming. A place of honor is also set for Elijah at the seder table, should he appear.

[A door to the outside is opened by a child.]

Family: As Israel opens a door at the Passover that Elijah may come in, so we open the door of our hearts that Messiah Jesus might enter. Behold He stands at the door and knocks, and if anyone hears His voice, He will come in with him and have fellowship with him always.

Cantor: Moreover, we realize that with the Holy Spirit of Jesus in us, we carry on the task of Elijah, preaching repentance to the world and directing the people of the world to the glory of the cross and the empty tomb of the Savior. Let us now bless the Lord who has taken us to be His people.



14. HALLEL הללה

Psalms of Praise

Cantor: I love the Lord, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.

Family: Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples. For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!

Cantor: Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to Your name be the glory, because of Your love and faithfulness.

Family: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good his love endures forever!

Elder 1: Let Israel say:

Family: "His love endures forever!"

Elder 2: Let the Priesthood say:

Family: "His love endures forever!"

Elder 3: Let the Church say:

Family: "His love endures forever!"

Elder 4: Let those who trust the Lord say:

Family: "His love endures forever!"

Cantor: *Ba-RUCH a-TAH a-doh-NOI* Blessed are You, Lord our
el-o-HAY-noo MEL-lech God, King of the Universe,
ha-o-LAM, bo-Ray p'ree Creator of the fruit of
ha-GO-fen. AH-mayn. the vine. Amen.

[The fourth cup is drunk.]



15. NIRTZAH נִרְצָה Conclusion

Cantor: *Cha-SAL si-DUR PE-sach* The seder is now concluded
K'hil-cha-TOH k'chal mish- in accordance with all its
PA-toh v'chu-KA-toh, k'ah- laws, ordinances and statutes.
SHER ah-CHI-noo I'sa-DER Just as we were
oh-TOH, ken niz-KAY la-ah- privileged to arrange it,
SOH-toh. so is it our joy to perform it.

Cantor: O righteous Lord, who dwells on high, raise up the countless congregation of your people soon, and guide the offshoots of Your plants, redeemed as well, to Zion with glad song.

Family: *L'sha-NAH ha-ba'AH* Next year in Jerusalem
*Bee-roo-sha-LAI-yeem!**

Cantor: May the Lord, blessed be He,
grant us His shalom.

Family: *Shalom!* Peace!

* לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם

Appendix B:

Worship Material for the Observance of Shavuoth

Text of the Akdamuth (1)

Before reciting the Ten Commandments,
I first ask permission and approval
To start with two or three stanzas in fear
Of God who creates and ever sustains.
He has endless might, not to be described
Were the skies parchment, were all the
reeds quills,
Were the seas and all waters made of ink,
Were all the world's inhabitants made
scribes.

The glorious Lord of heaven and earth,
Alone, formed the world, veiled in mystery,
Only by a light sign, without substance.
He accomplished all His work in six days;
His glory ascended to a throne of fire.
Millions of legions are at His service;
Fresh each morning they flourish with great
faith.

More glowing are the six-winged seraphim
Who keep silence till leave is given them.
Without delay they call to one another:
"God's majestic splendor fills the whole
earth!"

Like a mighty thunder, like ocean's roar,
The cherubim and the spheres rise loudly
To gaze at the rainbow-like appearance.
Wherever sent, they hasten anxiously,
Whispering praise in each tongue:
"Blessed be His glory in his entire universe."
All the heavenly hosts shout praise in awe:
"His glory shines forever and ever!"
Their hymn is timed; when the hour is gone,
They shall at no period chant it again.
Dear to Him are the people of Israel,
Acclaiming Him each morning and evening.
They are dedicated to do His will;
His wonders, His praises, they declare
hourly.

He desires them to toil in the Torah,
So that their prayer be will accepted,
Bound up in the crown of the Eternal,
Securely set near the precious frontlet.
His frontlet is most skillfully inscribed:
"Great is Israel who proclaims God's
Oneness."

The praise of the world's Lord, in pure
homage,
I am pleased to declare before the kings.
They come and gather like the surging
waves,
Wondering and asking about the signs:
Whence and who is your beloved, O fair
one?

For whom do you die in the lions' den?
Most precious are you; if you merge with us
We will do your will in all the regions.
With wisdom I answer them concisely:
You must recognize and acknowledge Him!
Of what value is your glory compared
With all that God will do for me in due time,
When light will come to me and shame to
you,

When He will reveal Himself in great might?
He will repay the foes in all the isles;
Triumph to the dear and upright people!
Perfect joy, pure delight, will come into
Jerusalem when He will gather the exiles.
His glory will shield Zion day and night,
While His tent for praise will be made in it
Under a splendid canopy of bright clouds.
For each godly man a booth will be made,
Furnished with a gold throne of seven steps.
The righteous will be arrayed before God,
Their sight resembling sevenfold delight,
The brilliant sky and the luminous stars--
A splendor that no language can describe,
That was not heard of nor viewed by
prophets.

No eye has penetrated Paradise,
Where the righteous dance in presence of
God,

Reverently pointing out: "This is He
For whom we looked in exile with firm faith!
He now gently guides us eternally,
Granting us the share long reserved for us."
Leviathan contends with Behemoth;
They are locked in combat with each other.
Behemoth gores mightily with its horns;
The sea-monster counters with potent fins.
The Creator slays them with His great
sword,

And prepares a banquet for the righteous,
Who sit in rows at tables of precious stones,
While before them there flow streams of
balsam,
And they indulge themselves and drink full
cups

Of the precious old wine preserved in vats.
You upright, having heart this hymn of
praise,

May you be in that blissful company!
You will merit to sit in the first row
If you will obey God's majestic words.
God, exalted from beginning to end,
Was pleased with us and gave us the Torah.

CHECKLIST FOR SHAVUOTH by Martha Zimmerman (2)

Friday Night:

- Prepare a special dinner
- Enjoy the Night Watch

Saturday:

- Breakfast
- Tie the red thread
- Harvest your first fruits
- Plant a fruit tree as a memorial
- Rest

Sunday Morning:

- Celebrate Pentecost, the Birthday of the Church
- Attend the service of your choice

Sunday Afternoon:

- Festival of First Fruits celebration



FESTIVAL OF FIRST FRUITS CELEBRATION

(A SERVICE OF JOY) by Martha Zimmerman (2)

Greet those who arrive with these words:

"Enter in Peace"

Introduction:

Briefly explain the celebration

Fathers read verses:

Psalm 119:105

Proverbs 23:15-16

Proverbs 23:24-25

Let a child read:

Ephesians 6:1-3

A father responds:

Ephesians 6:4

Sharing time:

Let each family member "show and tell" what he brought

After the gift is presented, sing a response:

"I will praise Thee, Lord, with my whole heart.

I will show forth thy marvellous works" (Ps. 9:1 KJV)

A Key principle:

We offer God our Best!

Blessings and dedication:

Bless the gifts and those who brought them.

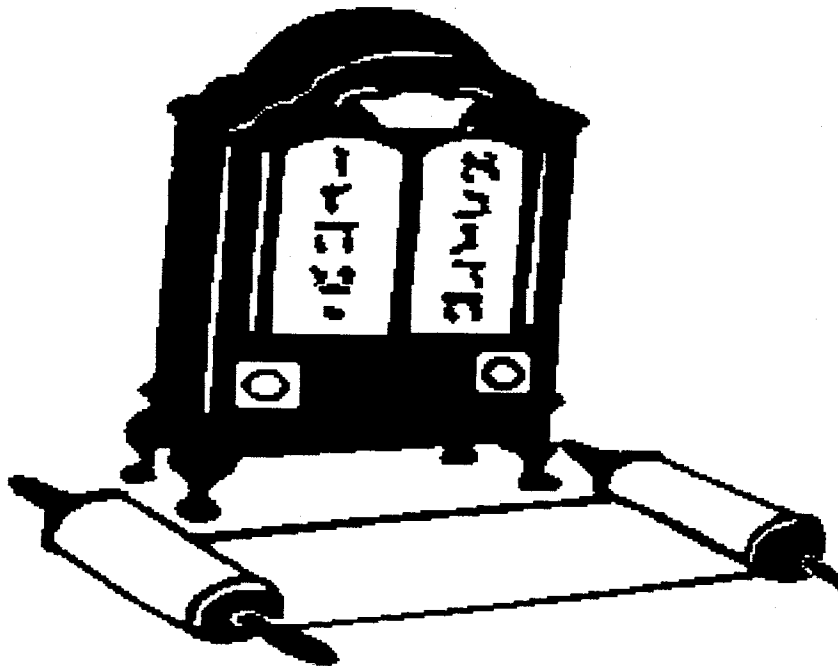
Dedicate the offerings to the Lord!

Remember we are "blessed to be a blessing!"

At the close of the service after a time of visiting and refreshments (strawberries dipped in powdered sugar, lemonade, etc.) take your gift and give it to someone. In the days of the Temple, it would have been filled with good things. The Old Testament emphasis was on bringing offerings to the Temple storehouse. New Testament passages are concerned with giving to others. ...You will like the feelings that are produced as you deliver your gifts to a shut-in, neighbor, relative, needy family or special friend.

NOTES

1. Text of Akdamuth --Translated by Philip Birnbaum. *Prayer Book for Shavuoth*. Hebrew Publishing Co., New York, NY. 1979. pp. 174-180.
2. Reprinted by permission from *Celebrate the Feasts* by Martha Zimmerman. Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN, 1981.



Appendix C:

Worship Material for the Observance of Rosh Hashanah

Text of the Avinu Malkenu (1)

Our Father, our King! We have sinned before You.
Our Father, our King! We have no King except You.
Our Father, our King! Deal with us kindly for the sake of Your Name.
Our Father, our King! Renew for us a good year.
Our Father, our King! Annul all harsh decrees concerning us.
Our Father, our King! Annul the designs of those who hate us.
Our Father, our King! Thwart the plans of our enemies.
Our Father, our King! Rid us of every oppressor and adversary.
Our Father, our King! Close the mouths of our accusers.
Our Father, our King! Remove pestilence, sword, famine, captivity, destruction and the burden of iniquity from the members of Your covenant.
Our Father, our King! Withhold the plague from Your inheritance.
Our Father, our King! Forgive and pardon all our iniquities.
Our Father, our King! Blot out all our transgressions and sins from before Your Eyes.
Our Father, our King! Erase in Your abundant mercy all records of our liabilities.
Our Father, our King! Bring us back in wholehearted repentance before You.
Our Father, our King! Send complete healing to the sick among Your people.
Our Father, our King! Tear up the evil parts of our sentence.
Our Father, our King! Remember us favorably before You.
Our Father, our King! Inscribe us in the Book of Good Life.
Our Father, our King! Inscribe us in the Book of Maintenance and Sustenance.
Our Father, our King! Inscribe us in the Book of Merits.
Our Father, our King! Inscribe us in the Book of Pardon and Forgiveness.
Our Father, our King! Cause deliverance to spring forth for us soon.
Our Father, our King! Raise up the might of Israel, Your people.
Our Father, our King! Raise up the might of Your anointed.
Our Father, our King! Fill our hands with Your blessings.
Our Father, our King! Fill our storehouses with abundance.
Our Father, our King! Hear our voice, spare us and have compassion on us.
Our Father, our King! Accept our prayer with compassion and favor.
Our Father, our King! Open the gates of heaven to our prayer.
Our Father, our King! Remember that we are dust.
Our Father, our King! Please do not turn us away empty-handed from You.
Our Father, our King! Let this hour be an hour of compassion and a time of favor before You.
Our Father, our King! Have compassion upon us, and upon our children and infants.
Our Father, our King! Do it for the sake of those who were slain for Your holy Name.
Our Father, our King! Do it for the sake of those who were slaughtered for proclaiming Your unity.
Our Father, our King! Do it for the sake of those who went through fire and water for the sanctification of Your Name.
Our Father, our King! Avenge the spilled blood of Your servants.
Our Father, our King! Do it for Your sake, if not for ours.
Our Father, our King! Do it for Your sake and deliver us.
Our Father, our King! Do it for the sake of Your great mercy.
Our Father, our King! Do it for the sake of Your great, mighty and awesome Name which is proclaimed upon us.
Our Father, our King! Favor us and answer us, for we have no accomplishments; deal with us charitably and kindly, and deliver us.

Tashlich Service, by Martha Zimmerman (2)

Readings: Romans 13:11-14
1 Peter 5:7
Psalm 55:22
Micah 7:19
Acts 5:31
Ephesians 1:7
Isaiah 44:22
Isaiah 43:25

[A son asks his father the following questions:]

Father: This afternoon the ceremony we are celebrating is called Tashlich.

Son: What does that word mean?

Father: It is a Hebrew word that means, "Thou wilt cast."

Son: On the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, why do we go to a stream of water containing fish?

Father: It is to remind us that we are like so many fish caught unaware in the net of sin. This awareness should encourage us to ask for forgiveness. "Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net, and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them" [Eccl. 9:12].

Son: What is the meaning of emptying the corners of our pockets after completing the Tashlich ceremony?

Father: By emptying the dirt from our pockets, we remind ourselves that we should look inside and brush away every trace of evil so that we may become free from sins.

Son: Why do we shake our clothes or pockets?

Father: Because sins are sticky! Sometimes they really cling and hang on. We should throw ALL of them away.

First reader: Micah 7:18-19

Second reader: Psalm 118:5-8

Third reader: Psalm 130

Fourth reader: Psalm 33:20-22

Leader: We came to the river this afternoon, our pockets filled with rocks. The rocks are symbolic of sins. As you reach into your pocket and feel a pebble, think about some sin, an action or thought for which you are sorry. Ask God to forgive you as you throw it into the moving stream. Know that He forgives you, that He is washing it away, and thank Him.

[Allow for a short period of silent preparation. Begin to throw rocks into the river and encourage others to join in. After a few minutes, gather in a circle for a closing prayer. Spread a picnic cloth and serve tea and honey cake.]

(1) Text for the Avinu Malkenu Trans. Philip Birnbaum, *High Holyday Prayer Book, Rosh Hashanah*. Hebrew Publishing Company, New York, 1960.

(2) Reprinted by permission from *Celebrate the Feasts* by Martha Zimmerman. Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN, 1981.

Appendix D:

Worship Material for Yom Kippur

Text of the Kol Nidre

Now, may it be thy will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, to forgive all our sins, to pardon all our iniquities, and to grant atonement for all our transgressions.

For the sin we committed in thy sight forcibly or willingly,
And for the sin we committed against thee by acting callously.

For the sin we committed in thy sight unintentionally,
And for the sin we committed against thee by idle talk.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by lustful behavior,
And for the sin we committed against thee publicly or privately.

For the sin we committed in thy sight knowingly and deceptively,
And for the sin we committed against thee by offensive speech.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by oppressing a fellow man,
And for the sin we committed against thee by evil thoughts.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by lewd association,
And for the sin we committed against thee by insincere confession.

For the sin we committed by contempt for parents or teachers,
And for the sin we committed against thee willfully or by mistake.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by violence,
And for the sin we committed against thee by defaming thy name.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by unclean lips,
And for the sin we committed against thee by foolish talk.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by the evil impulse,
And for the sin we committed against thee wittingly or unwittingly.

Forgive us all sins, O God of forgiveness, and grant us atonement.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by fraud and falsehood,
And for the sin we committed against thee by bribery.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by scoffing,
And for the sin we committed against thee by slander.

For the sin we committed in thy sight in dealings with men,
And for the sin we committed against thee in eating and drinking.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by usury and interest,
And for the sin we committed against thee by lofty bearing.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by our manner of speech,
And for the sin we committed against thee by wanton glances.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by haughty airs,
And for the sin we committed against thee by scornful defiance.

Forgive us all sins, O God of forgiveness, and grant us atonement.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by casting off responsibility,
And for the sin we committed against thee in passing judgment.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by plotting against men,
And for the sin we committed against thee by sordid selfishness.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by levity of mind,
And for the sin we committed against thee by being obstinate.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by running to do evil,
And for the sin we committed against thee by talebearing.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by swearing falsely,
And for the sin we committed against thee by groundless hatred.

For the sin we committed in thy sight by breach of trust,
And for the sin we committed against thee by a confused heart.

Forgive us all sins, O God of forgiveness, and grant us atonement.

{from Philip Birnbaum, Trans. *High Holyday Prayer Book, Yom Kippur*.
Hebrew Publishing Company, New York, 1960. pp. 68-72}



Appendix E:

Worship Supplement for the eight days of SUKKOTH

1. First Evening [Kiddush]

[Kiddush is a blessing over wine to be shared in fellowship with the gathered family of God.]

Leader: *Ba-RUCH a-TAH A-doh-NAI El-oh-HAY-noo ME-lech ha-oh-LAM, bo-RAY p'ree ha-GOH-fen.* (Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.)

Family: Blessed be the Vine who has called us His branches and caused us to bear fruit by the power of His Spirit.

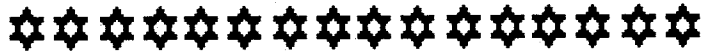
Leader: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has chosen us, exalted us, and sanctified us by Your commandments and promises. You, Lord our God, have graciously given us this holiday for gladness and festive season for joy: this Feast of Tabernacles, our festival of rejoicing, a holy convocation in remembrance of our freedom from bondage.

Family: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified Your commandments and commanded us to dwell in booths to remember that though our flesh be a temporary dwelling, even so You pitch Your tent among us in humility.

Leader: May we always be Your humble servants.

Family: Be pleased, O Lord, to dwell among us now and at the final day of ingathering. Amen!

[A time of free prayer and petition follows; wine is drunk (toast: "*L'chaim*" or "*L'athonai*") and fellowship continues.]



2. Second Evening [waving the Lulav]

Leader: I am ready to fulfill the command of my Creator who has commanded us in His Torah: "...you shall take for yourselves branches of palm trees, limbs of leafy trees and water-willows."

Family: As I wave them, may God shower me with blessings and imbue me with holy thoughts.

Leader: He is Supreme God, the Lord of Lords, Ruler of earth and heaven, whose majesty has dominion over all things.

Family: Blessed be the Lord our God, King of the Universe, and blessed be He who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hoshana! Hoshana! Come quickly and save us!

Leader: I thank You, Lord, that You have answered me and become my "Y'shua" [Savior].
The stone rejected by the builders has become the head of the corner.
Hallelujah!

Family: This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes! Today is our day of salvation.

Leader: This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Family: O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!
Amen!



3. Third Evening [The Blessings of God]

Adult: *Ba-RUCH a-TAH A-doh-NAI, El-oh-HAY-noo ME-lech ha-oh-LAM.*

Child: All the prayers start with *Ba-RUCH a-TAH A-doh-NAI* in Hebrew worship. What does this mean?

Adult: It means "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe."

Child: But what does "Blessed are You" really mean?

Adult: It means that God is to be praised and thanked by us. The Hebrew word "Baruch" actually comes from the word for "to kneel." We kneel to God, to praise Him and thank Him for all that we are and have. We bow before Him because He is a King over all the earth, our Creator and Creator of all things. Our prayers should praise and thank Him!

Child: But when I pray, I ask Him for *THINGS*. Is that wrong?

Adult: Indeed no, but we must make sure that we are giving thanks and praise as we receive our blessings, so God may receive our willing love. On the Sabbath, we believe we should rest from our labors as God rested from His after He created the universe. For this reason, we try to give the Lord a rest from our many needs on the Sabbath and offer Him our praise and thanksgiving instead of always asking for things.

Child: Let us give the Lord our praise and thanks right now!
[A time of prayer and songs and psalms of praise follows.]

Adult: Let us bless the Lord, Who is blessed!

Child: Thanks be to God!

Adult: May the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon us, and give us His *Shalom*.

Child: *Ba-RUCH a-TAH A-doh-NAI !*

4. Fourth Evening [Hallelujah!]

Read Psalm 116.

- Praise God for:
1. Life and new life
 2. Nurturing our faith
 3. For revival and healing
 4. For Messiah's blood of sacrifice, poured out like water on the earth
 5. For our calling as harvesters
 6. For a drink of cold water as we toil in the heat of the day
 7. For the promise of rest and peace at the ingathering



5. Fifth Evening [Prayer for Rain]

Leader: You, O Lord, are mighty forever; You revive the dead, You are powerful to save. May the Lord send rain from the heavenly source, to soften the earth with its crystal drops. You have named water the symbol of Your might; its drops refresh all that have breath of life; and You revive those who praise Your powers of rain.

O God, and God of our Fathers, remember Abraham who followed You like water, whom You blessed like a tree planted near streams of water. You shielded him, You saved him from fire and water; You did care for him when he sowed by all streams of water.

Family: For his sake, do not refuse water.

Leader: Remember Isaac whose birth was foretold over a little water; You told his father to offer his blood like water; Isaac was heedful in pouring out his heart like water; digging wells, he did discover You.

Family: For his sake, do not refuse water.

Leader: Remember Jacob who, staff in hand, crossed the Jordan's water; his heart trusted when he rolled the stone of the well of water; when he wrestled with the prince of fire and water, You promised to be with him through fire and water.

Family: For his sake, do not refuse water.

Leader: Remember Moses in an ark of papyrus reeds drawn out of the water; they said: "He drew water for us and provided the flock with water"; and when Your chosen people thirsted for water, he struck the rock and there gushed out water.

Family: For his righteousness' sake, grant abundant water.

Leader: Remember the temple-priest who bathed five times in water; he removed sins when he washed his hands with sanctified water; he read from the Scriptures when he sprinkled purifying water; he was kept at a distance from a people as turbulent as water.

Family: For his sake, do not refuse water.

Leader: Remember the twelve tribes which You did bring across the water; You sweetened for them the bitterness of the water; for Your sake the blood of their descendants spilt like water; turn to us, for our life is encircled by foes like water.

Family: For their righteousness' sake, grant abundant water.

Leader: Remember the prophets who poured out Your messages of life like streams of water.

Family: Refresh us with living water.

Leader: Remember Your Anointed, Y'shua, who poured out His Spirit upon us.

Family: Well up within us a spring of life-giving water, issuing forth rivers of Your loving-kindness into the world.

Leader: For You are the Lord our God, who causes the wind to blow, the rain to fall, and the Spirit to flow.

Family: For a blessing and not for a curse. Amen. For life and not for death. Amen. For plenty and not for scarcity. Amen.



6. Sixth Evening [Musaf for Festivals]

Amidah [recited in silent meditation]

When I proclaim the name of the Lord, give glory to God! O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our Fathers, great, mighty and revered God, sublime God who gives loving-kindness and is Master of all things; who graciously brought a Redeemer to us and to our children for the sake of Your name!

Leader: O King, Supporter, Savior and Shelter; blessed are You, O Lord, Shield of Abraham!

Family: You, O Lord, are mighty forever. You revive the dead and are powerful to save.

Leader: You sustain the living with kindness, support those who fall, heal the sick, set the captives free, and keep the faith with those who sleep in the dust.

Leader: Who is like You, Lord of Power? Who resembles You, O King?

Family: You bring death and restore life, and cause salvation to flourish.

Leader: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe.

Family: Blessed are You who are faithful to restore life to the dead. Amen.

[A time of free prayer and praise follows.]

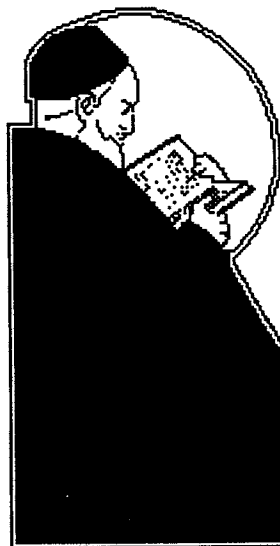
7. Seventh Evening [Messianic Prayer of Hoshana Rabba]

A voice heralds, proclaims and says: turn to me and be saved today, if you hear my voice. Behold the man who sprang forth -- Branch is His name, David himself. Stand up! Be buried in the dust no longer! You that dwell in the dust, wake up and sing. The people will be glad when He rules; the name of the ungodly shall perish. But to His anointed, the Messiah David, He gives grace. Grant salvation to the eternal people, to David and his seed forever, the voice cries and says.



8. Eighth Evening [Rejoicing in the Law]

The day following the *Hoshana Rabba* is the *Simcha Torah* (rejoicing in the law). During this festival, Psalm 119 is read, songs of praise are sung, and dancing and rejoicing break forth. As Israel rejoiced in the law as the means through which the hope of Sukkoth would be realized, so we rejoice in Y'shua, Jesus, who fulfilled the law and pours forth grace and everlasting life upon His people.



Appendix F: Supplemental Material on the eight days of Hanukkah

The Dreidel, A Hanukkah Game

The name *dreidel* comes from the German word '*drehen*' meaning to spin. According to game historians, the four-sided top was a well-known toy quite popular in medieval Germany. It became a highlight of Hanukkah festivities since the celebration emphasizes all types of joyous activities.

Symbolically, the dreidel top reminds us of the 'turnover' of events when the Maccabees with their few, toppled the great army of Antiochus. The strong were 'spun' into the hands of the weak. Some have also noted that the dreidel is spun from above, illustrating that it is God who spins worldly events to their rightful conclusion.

Before World War II and the age of synthetics, most dreidels were cast in lead or carved from wood. Today, however, most mass produced dreidels are made from plastic. Inexpensive dreidels can be purchased at Jewish gift shops or book stores. The two largest producers of dreidels are found in Jerusalem and in Japan. Over half a million come from Jerusalem each year.

The four Hebrew letters, *nun* [נ], *gimmel* [ג], *heh* [ה], and *shin* [ש] decorate the four-sided top. They form an acrostic for the phrase that best describes the great event: "*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham*" -- "A great miracle happened there." In Israel, one letter is changed: the shin becomes *peh* [פ]. The Peh stands for Po, which means *here*.

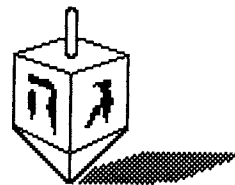
In Gamatria (Hebrew numerology), the four letters on the dreidel have the number value of 358, which is the same numerical value as the word 'Messiah.'

How to play the Game:

In German, the four letters stand for '*Nichts*' (nothing), '*Ganz*' (all), '*Halb*' (half), and '*Schtell*' (put). Each player puts something into the central kitty, perhaps raisins, nuts, candies or pennies. Then the players take turns spinning the dreidel. If nun comes up, the player gets nothing. If heh appears, the player gets half the pot. If shin shows, the player must

put two additional items into the pot. The first one to get gimmel wins and ends the game by getting all that is in the kitty. Then a new game is started.

All kinds of games have been traditionally played during the Hanukkah evenings. Also, jests, puzzles, charades, skits, stories and lots of singing take place. Playing cards has also been popular at this time. Most rabbis protested against playing cards. A Rabbi Yitschok was against it too, but he ended up putting the best possible construction on it by claiming that Jews played cards on Hanukkah evenings in order to accustom themselves to stay up late so they could study more Torah!



Hanukkah Food:

Latkes are the traditional food specialty. They are pancakes made with oil or other fats to symbolize the cruse of oil found in the temple by Judas the Maccabee. Cheese dishes are also popular. *Sufganiot*, or doughnuts, are also favorites.

Hanukkah Song: Mo'oz Tzur

Rock of Ages, Let our song
Praise Thy saving power:
Thou amidst the raging foes,
Wast our shelt'ring tower.
Furious, they assailed us,
But Thine arm availed us,
And Thy word...
Broke their sword...
When our own strength failed us.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

After Alexander the Great died in 331 B.C., his great kingdom was divided between his four chief generals. One, Seleucus, got control of what is now Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Israel. Another, Ptolemy, ruled Egypt. Syria and Egypt struggled constantly with each other, and Israel was caught in the middle. Egypt gained control of Israel in 301 B.C. and ruled it for a hundred years. Then Israel came under Syria and the Seleucids again. Both kingdoms allowed the Jews to have religious freedom up until the time when Antiochus IV came to power in 175 B.C. He spelled great danger for the Jewish people.

Antiochus called himself '*Epiphanes*,' meaning 'God Visible.' In his pride and mental instability, he probably really believed that he was divine. The common people gave him another title: '*Epimanes*,' meaning 'madman.' Antiochus wanted Egypt and actually conquered it, but the more powerful Roman Republic forbid him from annexing it. Angered and embarrassed by this, Antiochus resolved to solidify his Syrian Empire by building up his strength from within, so that he could expand later on when the timing might be more favorable.

The method Antiochus chose to unify his empire was the policy of Hellenization. By force, he decided to make every person under his dominion accept the Greek gods and customs whether they wanted to or not. Other peoples gave in quite quickly, bowing to what they thought must be gods superior to their own. The Jews did not give in. That is, the majority of the Jewish People did not compromise their faith. A small minority of rich and influential Jewish leaders did want Hellenization. They fell in love with Greek culture, speech, dress, athletics and opportunities. These assimilated Jews succeeded in getting one of their own into the position of High Priest. This man, Menelaus (Menachem), was not even in the family line of the priesthood. He had no right either by birth or by spiritual stature to hold that sacred office.

Antiochus went to Jerusalem to defend his puppet, Menelaus, in 168 B.C. He took drastic action and defamed and desecrated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem by forcibly forbidding Jewish worship, and causing swine to be sacrificed instead. To the faithful Jews, this was the darkest day in their history since the first temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587

B.C. This was truly fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of 'the abomination of desolation' that would come to the temple. The date was the 25th of Kislev, the 9th month.

Antiochus showed total contempt for the Jews and their one invisible God. The death sentence was carried out for those caught studying Torah, for circumcising, for observing the Sabbath, for not eating swine, for not worshipping pagan deities; even for praying. His madness became a monomania for wiping out stubborn Jewish resistance to his will.

There were many martyrs. Many Jews also fled to the wilderness and hid in caves. Many were hunted down and killed. The Jewish people were in shock, and mourned the holocaust that was sweeping over them. God heard their cries, just as He had so many times in the past. God brought dramatic deliverance by raising up one man, a priest, Mattathias, and his five sons. These men led the Jews into open and armed revolt when the Syrians came to their village of Modein to force the people to sacrifice swine to idols.

For three years, the Jewish resistance flourished as it grew from small ambushes to pitched battles. Time and again the few caused the many to panic and flee. Judah Maccabee, the third son of Mattathias, came forth as a military genius and genuine leader of his people. He was called *Maccabee*, which means 'The Hammer,' because of the many blows he struck for Jewish religious and political freedom.

Exactly three years after the that dark day of the 25th of Kislev, 168 B.C., on the 25th of Kislev, 165 B.C., Judah Maccabee rededicated the Holy Temple to its proper purpose. The Temple had been cleansed and even rebuilt in the Sanctuary and altar areas. The perpetual lights were lit again, and prescribed burnt offerings were brought once again for Scriptural sacrifices. Tradition has it that holy oil that was found, a one day's supply, miraculously lasted the full eight days of the festivities surrounding the rededication.

In commemoration of these events, Judah Maccabee decreed that on the same day every year thereafter Hanukkah, which means 'dedication' would be celebrated for eight days.

In the Hanukkah synagogue services the full Hallel is included (Psalms 113-118.) Numbers 6:22-8:4 is also read. It tells of

the dedication of the sanctuary in the wilderness. Psalm 30 is also read, because it was written in commemoration of the dedication of the first Temple and because it speaks of deliverance. The main Scripture that is read is Zechariah 2:14-4:7. This contains the verse that best describes Hanukkah and the events leading up to the first Hanukkah Festival: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (4:6).



A Hanukkah Story: Judith and Holofernes

In the city of Bethulia, there lived a pious Jewish woman whose husband was killed in the battle with the Greeks. Her name was Judith. One day, a Syrian general, Holofernes, besieged her city and was ready to destroy it and kill all its inhabitants. Judith asked permission from the Elders of the city to try to save the

people and, at the same time, to avenge her husband's death.

In the evening, she took some wine and cheese with her, stole out of the city, and appeared before Holofernes. She offered to help him conquer the city. Holofernes, not suspecting anything, and thinking that Judith was willing to be a spy, agreed to this. She then offered him some strong wine, as well as some of her tasty cheese. Holofernes ate and drank with gusto. This made him very drowsy, and soon he fell asleep. Then Judith cut off his head with his own sword, tucked it under her arm, and entered the city. In the morning, the Syrians saw their commander's head on the top of a pole at the gates of the city. They became very frightened, and the people of Bethulia attacked the confused Syrians and defeated them.

To honor the brave Judith, it has become a custom among Jews to eat dairy dishes on Hanukkah to remind them of the cheese which Judith fed Holofernes.

The text of this story can be found in the apocryphal book of Judith.

How to Celebrate Hanukkah

1. Hanukkah lights should be kindled each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, at nightfall (except Friday and Saturday, where this must be done just before and just after the sunset before and after the sabbath).
2. Light consecutive candles equaling the number of the evening of Hanukkah.
3. Before kindling the lights, the appropriate blessings should be recited:

For the first evening: *BoRUCH aTAH AdonAI, EloHAYnoo MElech haoLAM, shehecheYOnoo v'kiyiMOnoo v'higiYOnoo litzMAHN haZEH*. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion

Choose one of the two following for each of the other evenings: *BoRUCH aTAH AdonAI, EloHAYnoo MElech haoLAM, aSHER kidSHOnoo b'mitzvoSOV v'tziYOnoo l'hadLIK ner HANukkah*. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah light.

BoRUCH aTAH AdonAI, EloHAYnoo MElech haoLAM, sheOHso nisSIM la-avohSAYnoo bayoMIM hoHAYM bitzMAHN haZEH. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our fathers in those days at this time.

4. After the lights are kindled, recite or sing the prayer "*Haneyros Hallolu*": We kindle these lights to mark the marvelous victories and wonderful liberation which Thou didst achieve for our ancestors at this season through Thy holy priests. During all the eight days of Hanukkah these lights are hallowed; we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them, but only to look at them, so as to give thanks and praise to thy great name for Thy miracles, Thy wonders and Thy deliverance.
5. The Hanukkah lights should remain lit for at least a half hour into the night.

Appendix G:

Supplemental Material on Purim

A Purim Service (1)

PRAYER: O Guardian of Israel and Father of all, on this festival of Purim, we recall with gratitude, the aid Thou didst give to our fathers in the days of Mordecai and Esther when the wicked Haman sought to destroy the children of Israel. By Thy grace, Israel was saved and the enemy was caught in the snare which he had laid for the innocent. As in those days, so in all the centuries since, when cruel foes arose to crush us, Thou hast ever been our strength and consolation.

RESPONSIVE READING:

O Lord, our hope in every generation
We rejoice in the wondrous deliverance
Thou didst bring to pass for our fathers.

When Haman rose to curse us, Thou was at our side.

Thou didst bring to naught his base designs,
Delivering us from destruction.

In our day, too, O Lord our God,
We trust in Thy saving power.

We know it is Thy will that evil be subdued and righteousness prevail.

Keep us ever steadfast and just,
That no weapon formed against us may prosper.

Inspire us like Mordecai of old,
To be unswerving in our devotion to Thee.

Like Esther, may we ever be eager
To serve our people, even at the peril of our lives.

Cause us to know as Mordecai knew,
That whether we be born to high or low estate,
We share alike our people's lot.

That though we dwell in safety, blessed with abundance,
Our brothers' hurt is our hurt, their sorrow, ours.

Hasten the day when all oppression shall cease,
And tyranny shall forever be crushed.

When strife shall no longer set off man from man,
But all shall unite in true brotherhood
To serve each other, and thus, O Lord, serve Thee.

A SONG: *Hag Purim* (Good Purim)

Good Purim! Good Purim! Happy days of gladness!
Good Purim! Good Purim! Drive away all sadness!
Once a year, fill'd with cheer let's welcome Purim--
Welcome, welcome gladsome Purim.

[Before reading the Book of Esther, the following blessings are said:]

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast enjoined upon us the reading of the *Megillah*.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who at this season wroughtest miracles for our fathers in days of old.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast kept us in life, and hast preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.

The Book of Esther (or selected portions) is read.

SONGS:

Sho-sha-nat Ya-a-kov (Israel rejoiced)

Israel rejoiced and was glad
When Mordecai in purple was robed.
Thou hast ever been Israel's salvation,
Our hope in every generation,
To make known that all who have faith in Thee
Shall not be ashamed.
They who put their trust in Thee shall not be confounded.
Detested be the memory of Haman who sought to destroy us.
Blessed be the memory of Mordecai, the Jew.
Detested be the memory of Zeresh;
Blessed be the memory of Esther.
And may Harbonah also be remembered for good.

A'nee Purim (I am Purim)

I am Purim! Rejoice and make merry!
I come as a guest only once a year.
Hurrah for Purim! Beat the drum! Sound the cymbals!
O that Purim would come every month!
O Purim, why do you not come twice a week?

Thanksgiving and Praises

1. Sing aloud, sing aloud, thanksgiving and praises,
Thanksgiving and praises and praises,
God humbles the proud, God humbles the proud,
And the lowly He raises, and the lowly He raises, He raises,
Sing aloud, sing aloud, oh sing, sing aloud.
2. He calmeth the storm, allayeth our fears,
He heareth our prayers and drieth our tears,
Where is haman the wicked?
Where are the thousands of foes,
Who brought over Judah, the saddest of woes? (repeat verse 1)

Sing "Good Purim" again, along with other celebration songs.

A Purim Greeting:

Won't you open the door for me?
Won't you open the door for me?
Mishloah manaot (2) I bring you,
A Purim song I'll sing to you,
And I'll wish you, before I leave,
Much joy this Purim Eve!

Then follows a time of celebration: singing, games and feasting.



The PURIM PASTRY - Hamantaschen

The food most associated with Purim is the three-cornered pastry called, in Yiddish, *hamantaschen* (pronounced "*who-man-tash-in*"), or Haman's pockets. According to one interpretation, they remind us of the story that Haman's pockets were full of bribe money.

Some people claim that hamantaschen remind us of Haman's hat. But there is no evidence that such hats were worn in the Susa of his day. In Israel the pastries are called "*oznai Haman*," or Haman's ears. This is a reference to the past European custom of cutting off criminal's ears before they were hanged.

Hamantaschen are made from a circle of rolled dough which is turned up on three sides to form a triangular pastry. They are filled with prune or apricot preserves. Sometimes chocolate chips or poppy seed paste are used as filling as well.

NOTES

1. This service is based on *The Complete Purim Service*, compiled by Rabbi Morris Silverman. The Prayer Book Press of Media Judaica, Inc., Bridgeport, CT. 1847, 1981. pp. 4-7, 39-41.
2. *Mishloah manaot* are trays full of goodies.

ROBIN GREENSPAN'S PURIM PLAY

CAST LIST (in order of appearance)

Narrator
King Ahasuerus
Vashti
Memucan
Queen Esther
Servant Girl
Haman
Mordechai
Hatach
Zeresh

PROP LIST (in sequence)

Noisemakers (gragers) for audience - can be made by placing dried beans in a coffee can & decorating the coffee can.
Banquet table and trappings
Esther's crown
Mordechai's prayer shawl and prayerbook
Haman's 3-cornered hat and dice or lots
Ahasuerus' throne
Ahasuerus' signet ring
Ahasuerus' royal horse
Ahasuerus' royal robe
Handcuffs for Haman

Narrator: Welcome to our celebration of Purim and the re-enactment of the Scroll of Esther. Our setting is the Persian empire. Ruling over Persia is the gullible and egotistical King Ahasuerus who is assisted by his evil Prime Minister Haman.

As you will see, Haman plans to kill all the Jews in the Empire. He sets a date for this dastardly deed through casting dice or "lots". The Hebrew word for "lots" is "Purim." (*Pause.*) Since Haman failed, the Jews have turned the lots on him. So each year we celebrate God's protection of the Jewish people from Haman, and we call the celebration "Lots" or "Purim." One thing sets the Scroll of Esther apart from the rest of Scripture. (*Pause.*) Esther is the only biblical book which does not mention the name of God... and yet God's loving protection is most evident. This reminds us that God is always present and active in human affairs even when He is not identified by name.

Now a few words about audience conduct! Purim is a thoroughly happy holiday, and the rabbis command that we be uproariously joyful. It is traditional to demonstrate our feelings such that when righteous Mordechai walks on stage, we clap and cheer him; and when the evil Haman enters, we should boo him and express our anger through rattling noisemakers and stomping our feet. Why don't you try out your noisemakers now?Great!And now close your eyes... when you open them you will be in the land of Persia! (*Narrator makes a 180 degree turn.*)

Narrator: Long ago, about 500 years before Messiah, there was a king named Ahasuerus. He was the ruler of the Persian Empire which stretched from

India to Ethiopia. Ahasuerus spent much of his time partying and feasting. In those days, there was a party for men and a party for women. So while King Ahasuerus threw a party in one section of Shushan the palace, his wife, Queen Vashti, threw a party for the women in another section of the palace. In the middle of the feast, Ahasuerus decided he wanted to show off his pretty wife. So he commanded his servant, Memucan, to bring Queen Vashti to the men's party.

(*Ahasuerus on one side of the stage and Vashti on the other side. Memucan travels between the two.*)

Memucan: Queen Vashti, the King commands that you come to his festivities.

Vashti: Well, I won't! I will *NOT* go to his party. You can tell him I said so!

Memucan: Your Most Honorable, Most Exalted King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti refuses to come.

Ahasuerus: (*exploding*) What!! How dare she!!! ... (*subdued*) What'll I do?

Memucan: Your Highness, the Queen has not only insulted *YOU*, she has also insulted all the princes and all the people who live in your 127 provinces. Because of what Vashti did, all women will despise their husbands. If it please the King, let there go forth a royal command saying, "Vashti shall never come before the King again, and the King will choose a new queen." We will have a competition among all the beautiful young women in the Empire, and Your Highness will choose the loveliest girl to be the new queen. When the women in all the pro-

vinces hear this, they will give great honor to their husbands.

Ahasuerus Very good. Do as you say. (*Ahasuerus, Vashti and Memucan exit.*)

Narrator: Now in Shusan the palace there was a Jew named Mordechai of the tribe of Benjamin. He and his fellow Jews had been carried away in captivity from Israel to Babylon. Then Mordechai moved from Babylon to Persia. Mordechai had raised his niece, Esther, because her parents died when she was young. Esther was lovely to look upon, and she had a gentle spirit. When Mordechai heard that the King was looking for beautiful young women to compete for the title of Queen, he took Esther to Shushan the palace.

(*Mordechai and Esther center stage.*)

Mordechai: Esther, goodbye for now. You must live in the palace to prepare for the time when you will meet the King. And remember, don't tell *ANYBODY* you're Jewish!

Esther: All right, Uncle Mordechai. (*The two embrace and walk toward opposite sides of the stage, waving goodbye while walking.*)

Narrator: Like all the thousands of young women who were competing to become the Queen, Esther spent a year applying various perfumes and potions to make her more desirable, although she was less vain than the other women. Finally the day came for her to meet the King.

(*Memucan and Ahasuerus center stage, Esther stands at side of stage.*)

Memucan: Your Highness, so far you have said "no" to 750 women who wanted to be Queen.

Ahasuerus: I will say "no" to another 750 until I find the woman I want. Why shouldn't I have the best? I'M the king!

Memucan: As you say, Your Excellency. This next girl is named Esther.

Esther: (*approaches and curtsies*) Most High, Exalted King, I am privileged to stand before you.

Ahasuerus: You; you're different from all the others. I can't put my finger on it. I like you. I want you to be my Queen. Memucan, have the Servant Girl bring the crown for the new Queen Esther!!

(*Servant Girl hands Memucan the crown. Mem. crowns Esther. All exit.*)

Narrator: Since Mordechai didn't want anyone to know Esther was a Jew, she couldn't tell anyone Mordechai was her uncle. For that reason he didn't come to the palace. Instead they met every day at a certain corner.

(*Esther and Mordechai center stage.*)

Mordechai: Esther, you'll never believe what I found out today! There's a plot to murder the King. These two guys, Bigthan and Teresh, plan to kill him soon. If you tell the King I told you about this, maybe he will find a position for me at Shushan the palace.

Esther: Yes, Uncle Mordechai. I'll tell the King as soon as I can! (The two exit.)

Narrator: Esther told the King, who investigated and found that what she said was true, so the two conspirators were hanged. But the King forgot about Mordechai. His mind was distracted by his appointment of a new Secretary of State -- Mr. Haman, a descendant of Agag. Haman was thrilled by his new power, and he commanded all the people in the empire to bow down before him.

(*Mordechai on stage, praying in the traditional Jewish manner which is to stand and rock back and forth murmuring in Hebrew. Haman enters, strutting.*)

Haman (to Mordechai): Why don't you bow before me?

Mordechai: I can't do that. I'm a Jew. We bow only before the Lord God.

Haman: (exploding) You'll pay for this ... (*aside to audience*) and not only him, but all of his people. I will find a way to kill all the Jews! (*Pulls dice or other divining object from his pocket.*) Here are my lots. I'm going to cast lots or "purim" to find the day when all the Jews will be killed. (*Rolls dice.*) Let's see, it says the 12th month, the 13th day. That has a certain ring to it -- no more Jews after the 12th month, the 13th day! Now to see the King. I'm sure I can get him to approve my plan. I'll figure out an angle that will appeal to him.

(*Mordechai exits and Ahasuerus enters.*)

Haman: (bows) Your Supremacy, I am so pleased to be in the employ of the divine

King Ahasuerus of the great Persian Empire. If only I could change one thing, I would be completely happy.

Ahasuerus: (*intrigued*) Oh? What would that be?

Haman: Your Highness, there is a people in your kingdom who are different from everyone else. They have their own laws and do not keep your decrees. Worst of all, they have a god who they say is greater than you.

Ahasuerus: (*outraged*) Greater than ME?

Haman: Yes, what great folly! If it please the King, put forth a royal command that they be destroyed. I am so appalled at the *chutzpah* of this people, that I will put 10,000 talents of silver into the King's treasury. That will more than pay for their destruction.

Ahasuerus: Very generous, Haman. You are always looking out for my interests. Take this signet ring as a token of my pleasure with you. (*Ahasuerus and an overjoyed Haman exit.*)



(*Mordechai on one side of the stage, Esther on the other, Hatach travels between them.*)

Mordechai (*to audience*): (*in sackcloth and ashes, moaning & groaning*) Oy! Oy! Oy yoy yoy! Oy vey's mir!

Esther (*to Hatach*): I wonder why Uncle Mordechai didn't meet me today at our special corner. Hatach, please go and find Uncle Mordechai. I want to make sure he's all right.

Hatach (*to Mordechai*): No wonder you didn't come to the palace today. No one who is mourning is allowed to enter the palace. Queen Esther wants to know what's wrong.

Mordechai: She must not have heard the news! That evil Haman has manipulated the King into ending our people. On the 12th month, the 13th day, all the people in the Persian Empire will kill the Jews. We will all die, including Esther. Hatach, go, tell the Queen that she must see the King and plead for her life and the lives of all the Jews!

Hatach (*to Esther*): Your uncle said Haman paid 10,000 talents of silver so the King would have all the Jews killed. Mordechai wants you to go to the King and beg for mercy.

Esther (*to Hatach*): Go to my uncle and remind him that no one can see the King unless the King asks to see that person. It has been 30 days since the King asked to see me. If I go see him unannounced, he may kill me!

Hatach: Mordechai, she says if she goes to see the King unannounced, he may kill her.

Mordechai (*to Hatach*): Tell her she's just going to have to take that chance. Tell her if she doesn't speak up now, then the Jews will be saved by help from another place; but if she doesn't try, Esther and her family will be destroyed because of her disobedience. Who knows -- maybe she became Queen because of this very situation!

Hatach (*to Esther*): He says he believes you became Queen so you can help now in a way that no one else can.

Esther (*to Hatach*): Go, gather together all the Jews in Shushan and tell them to fast for 3 days. After 3 days, I will approach the King. If the King extends his sceptre to me, it means he accepts me. If he witholds his sceptre, it means he refuses me, and my life is over. I will also fast and pray to heaven. And if I perish, I perish. (*Esther, Morechai. and Hatach exit.*)

Narrator: The Jews and Esther fasted for 3 days. Then Esther took the chance; she went to see the King. (*Ahasuerus on throne center stage; Esther enters.*)

Ahasuerus (*putting forth his sceptre*): Why, Esther, you look more lovely than usual. I should have called you earlier to see me. What is your request, O my Queen? I shall give it to you and half the kingdom.

Esther: If it seems good to the King, let the King and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared. Ahasuerus: I would be delighted! Haman and I will come immediately. (*Ahasuerus, Esther turn around in their places and Haman enters pushing a dinner table. The three sit dining at banquet center stage. Improvisation with Ahasuerus drinking liberally.*)

Narrator: After a sumptuous meal, the King was feeling very pleased.

Ahasuerus: My beautiful Queen, what is your petition? Even to half of the kingdom, it shall be granted.

Esther: If I have found favor in the eyes of the King, and if it please the King to grant my petition, I would like the King and Haman to come to the banquet that I shall prepare tomorrow.

Ahasuerus: My Queen, you bring me such pleasure! I would be delighted, and I feel sure that Prime Minister Haman will also join us. (*Looks at Haman.*)

Haman: I would be honored!

(Ahasuerus escorts Esther offstage and Haman circles the stage as if to walk home. While he does so, Mor. enters and remains on one side of the stage, praying in the traditional Jewish manner.)



Narrator: Haman left the first banquet in ecstasy because he felt honored by the King and Queen. But on his way home, he saw something that put him in a rage. (*Mordechai, praying; Haman stops and stares. Mordechai ignores him. Haman clears his throat; Mord. ignores him. Haman clears his throat again, still Mord. ignores him.*)

Haman: (*angrily*) Scum! Vermin! You know you're supposed to bow before me.

Mordechai: I bow before no man.

(Haman throws a temper tantrum.)

Narrator: Haman hurried home to tell his wife about his day. (*Mordechai exits on one side and Zeresh comes out to join Haman from the other side. Haman and Zeresh walk to center stage.*)

Haman: (*affectionate gestures to his wife*) Zeresh, you will be so proud of me -- I was the only one at the banquet with the King and Queen! They must really like me. I'm invited to go back with them tomorrow. (*Revels in his importance, then remembers.*) Still my day was ruined because Mordechai the Jew did not bow before me!

Zeresh: I have an answer. Have a gallows built, 75 feet high. Then when you're with the King tomorrow, tell him about this offensive fellow. Surely the King will issue a royal command to hang Mordechai, and you'll have no more problems with that Jew!

Haman: Brilliant, my dear!

(Haman & Zeresh exit. Ahasuerus enters in sleeping costume. He sits on throne and Memucan enters bearing the Royal Diary. Haman on side of stage.)

Narrator: Meanwhile, at the palace, the King could not sleep, so he called Memucan and requested the royal diary be read. "Coincidentally" Memucan read about the day when Mordechai had saved the King's life by exposing the two conspirators.

Ahasuerus: What honor has been done for this man, Mordechai?

Memucan: Nothing, sire. (*Servant Girl enters and whispers in Memucan's ear, then exits.*) Excuse me, Your Honor, Haman is waiting in the court.

Ahasuerus: I will see him. (*Haman enters.*)

Ahasuerus (to Haman): Haman, you have perfect timing! I was just puzzling over a situation, and I would like your advice. There is a man to whom I am deeply grateful, overwhelmingly thankful, most assuredly beholden, in a word -- indebted. (*As Ahasuerus speaks each phrase, Haman gestures to the audience that he is sure he is that man.*) What shall I do to express my appreciation?

Haman: (*aside to audience*) Who would the King desire to honor more than ME? (*To the King*) Take the royal robes which the King used to wear and the royal crown. These things should be placed upon that man. Then lift up that man upon the royal horse. He should be led through the streets while this proclamation is shouted: "Thus shall it be done to the man the King delights to honor."

Ahasuerus: An excellent suggestion. Haman, I want you to take the royal garments, the royal horse, and my honorable crown. (*Haman grinning broadly, sure they are for him.*) Take them to Mordechai the Jew and lead him through the town with that proclamation.

(Haman almost falls over, turns to audience, and gestures how offended and shocked he is. But Memucan removes the crown from Ahasuerus and gives it to Haman, then gestures for the Servant Girl to enter and give Haman the royal robe and horse. Ahasuerus and Memucan exit. Dejectedly Haman walks across the stage and meets Mordecai who enters from the other side. Haman crowns Mordecai, puts the robe around him and circles the stage leading Mordecai on the horse. They exit. Haman reenters with his arm around Zeresh. As they enter, they are talking to each other silently. At center stage, they face the audience.)

Zeresh: Haman, if Mordechai is a Jew, before whom you have begun to fall, you will not be victorious over him; rather you will surely fall before him. *(Haman shakes his head and indicates great anxiety. Immediately Memucan enters.)*

Memucan: Greetings Mrs. Haman. Prime Minister, I am sorry to interrupt you, but the King sent me to remind you of the feast this evening. *(Memucan leads Haman in a circle around the stage. Zeresh exits. Ahasuerus leads Esther to center stage where they sit at a banquet table. Memucan seats Haman and then exits.)*

Narrator: Once again, Esther had prepared a lavish banquet, and Ahasuerus was in high spirits.

Ahasuerus: *(to Esther):* Beautiful wife, what is your request? To the half of the kingdom, I will grant it.

Esther: If I have found favor in your sight, O King, please give me my life and the lives of my people.

Ahasuerus: Lovely Esther, what are you talking about?

Esther: My people are to be destroyed, to be killed.

Ahasuerus: Who is he and where is he who would scheme such a thing??!!

Esther: Wicked Haman is the man! *(points to Haman.)* *(Haman shakes and is full of fright.)*

Ahasuerus: *(boiling over)* Haman, you are a dead man! I know you built a gallows to hang Mordechai. Instead the gallows will be used to hang YOU... TODAY!

(Memucan enters, fixes handcuffs on Haman. Mordecai enters and stands next to King. As Narrator reads, Ahasuerus takes ring off of Haman's finger & gives to Mordecai. Memucan leads a dour Haman offstage. Then Ahasuerus, Esther, and Mordecai walk in front of the banquet table, join hands, and smile very happily.)

Narrator: The King took his royal signet ring from Haman's finger and gave it to Mordechai naming him the new Secretary of State. The King also gave Esther Haman's house. Haman was hanged, and he died. Because the King's decrees could not be changed, the people of the Persian Empire were allowed to attack the Jews on the 12th month, the 13th day. However, the King issued another command stating the Jews could defend themselves. So on that day, the Jews secured a military victory, and then lived in peace and prosperity. Ever since that day, the Jews have celebrated the 12th month, the 13th day as Purim, the day of Lots, when the lot against the Jews was turned into a victory for the people who follow God!



Robin Greenspan and her husband, Herb, are Jewish believers in Jesus, active in Lutherans In Jewish Evangelism and their Local Lutheran congregation in Massachusetts. They have also been enthusiastic supporters of and volunteers for Apple of His Eye outreaches.

Appendix H:

Schedule of Jewish Holidays

(taken from the monograph: *Jewish Holidays*, by Erwin J. Kolb,
published by Board for Evangelism Services, LCMS, 1987)

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar is based on the period of the moon, rather than the sun which determines the common calendar of the rest of the world. The year based on the moon cycle is called a lunar year. It has only 354 days a year, while the solar year has 365 days. The Jewish calendar is centered on the agricultural activities of Israel. In order to stay with the proper seasons, a leap month was added approximately every three years to bring it back in balance. Today the Jewish people have two separate calendars, one a religious or sacred calendar and the other a civil or secular calendar, and each begins at a different time of the year.

The Jewish years are counted from the creation of the world so that 1993 is year 5754 A.M. The A.M. is for the Latin phrase, *Anno Mundi*, the year the world. Jewish people do not use B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*Anno Domini*, the year of the Lord). They use instead B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era).

The first month of the year for Jewish people depends on which of the two calendars one is using, the civil or religious. The civil calendar year begins in our September or October with the New Year's Day Festival of Rosh Hashanah. The religious year begins with the Passover in March or April.

<i>Jewish Months (Religious Sequence)</i>	<i>Festivals</i>
Abib, or Nisan [March-April]	Nisan 15 Passover Nisan 16 First Fruits
Ziv, or Ivar [April-May]	
Sivan [May-June]	
Tammuz [June-July]	
Ab [July-August]	
Elul [August-September]	
Tishri, or Ethanim [September-October]	Tishri 1 Rosh Hashanah Tishri 10 Yom Kippur Tishri 15 Sukkoth
Bul, or Marcheshvan [October-November]	
Kislev [November-December]	Kislev 25 Hanukkah
Tebeth [December-January]	
Shebat [January-February]	
Adar [February-March]	Adar 14 Purim**
Adar II * [leap month]	[Purim is celebrated on Adar II: 14 in leap years]

* Also called Adar Sheni, the 13th month which is added to bring the lunar calendar back in correspondence to the solar year. It is actually added seven times in 19 years, in the 3rd, 6th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of each cycle.

** In leap years, Purim is celebrated in the 14th day of the second Adar, or Adar Sheni. In those years, the 14th day of the first month of Adar is observed as Purim Katah (small Purim) but is not marked with a special celebration.

The Schedule

Jewish holidays are days set aside to commemorate special events in Jewish history. They are celebrated in several ways: with prayers and rituals, stopping work or not doing certain activities and, in some cases, by fasting or eating special foods. How one observes these holidays depends on the particular religious faith of the Jewish person, whether that person practices the Orthodox, the Conservative or Reform faith or whether he or she is a cultural, or secular Jew.

The holidays include days of repentance such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; seasonal festivals relating to harvest time, Sukkoth, Pesach, Savuoth; and days observing events in the history of the Jews: Hanukkah and Purim.

Included in this work are the primary religious festivals that have roots in the Scriptures. Other related holidays very important to the Jewish people today are: Yom Ha-Shoah, the holocaust remembrance day; Yom Ha-Atzmaut, marking the creation of the State of Israel (May 14, 1948); and Tisha Be-Av, marking the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Today Jews pray at the Western Wall, the last remaining part of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

All Jewish holidays, with the exception of some fasts, begin on the evening previous to the first day, a half hour before sunset. The schedule below is taken from a brochure by Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*.

	5754 [1993 1994]	5755 [1994 1995]	5756 [1995 1996]	5757 [1996 1997]	5758 [1997 1998]	5759 [1998 1999]	5760 [1999 2000]
Rosh Hashana¹	Sept. 16	Sept. 6	Sept. 25	Sept. 14	Oct. 2	Sept. 21	Sept. 11
Yom Kippur²	Sept. 25	Sept. 15	Oct. 4	Sept. 23	Oct. 11	Sept. 30	Sept. 20
Sukkoth³	Sept. 30	Sept. 20	Oct. 9	Sept. 28	Oct. 16	Oct. 5	Sept. 25
Shemini Atzereh⁴	Oct. 7	Sept. 27	Oct. 16	Oct. 5	Oct. 23	Oct. 12	Oct. 2
Hanukkah⁵	Dec. 9	Nov. 28	Dec. 18	Dec. 6	Dec. 24	Dec. 14	Dec. 4
Purim⁶	Feb. 25	March 16	March 5	March 23	March 12	March 2	March 21
Passover⁷	March 27	April 15	April 4	April 22	April 11	April 1	April 20
Yom Habikkurim⁸	April 2	April 21	April 10	April 28	April 17	April 7	April 26
Yom Ha-Shoah⁹	April 8	April 27	April 16	May 4	April 23	April 13	May 2
YomHa-Atzmaut¹⁰	April 14	May 4	April 24	May 12	April 30	April 21	May 10
Shavuoth¹¹	May 16	June 4	May 24	June 11	May 31	May 21	June 9
Tisha Be-Av¹²	July 17	Aug. 6	July 25	Aug. 12	July 22	July 22	Aug. 10

1. Civil New Year. See Chapter 3.
2. Day of Atonement. See Chapter 4
3. Harvest Festival running for 8 days. See Chapter 5
4. The Day after Sukkoth, included in Chapter 5
5. The Festival of Dedication. See Chapter 6
6. The Feast of Esther. See Chapter 7
7. Runs for 7 days; includes Feast of Unleavened Bread. Beginning of Religious New Year. See Chapter 1.
8. The Day of First Fruits, beginning the counting of the Omer. See Chapter 2.
9. Day of Remembrance. Observes a remembrance of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany.
10. The anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.
11. Pentecost, a second First Fruits festival. See Chapter 2.
12. Marks the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD.