

## *Prayer Update From Israel (March 30, 2015)*



### **FRIDAY EVENING BEGINS PASSOVER AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD.**

**“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed, Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:7-8).**

Friday at sundown Jews around the world will be gathered round tables in obedience to the command in Exodus 12:14, *“So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.”* They will have cleaned leaven from their homes (Ex. 12:19) and will begin a week of eating only unleavened bread (Hebrew: *matzot*). The word *Pesach* (Passover) comes from the Hebrew verb *lifso'ach* which means “to skip”. When the scourge passed through Egypt, those with the blood of the lamb on their doorposts were ‘skipped’ the judgment which came upon the rest of Egypt. The meal is celebrated at a *seder* table. *Seder* means “order”. In modern Hebrew *b'seder*—‘o.k.’ is literally pronouncing things to be ‘in order’. So, at the *seder* table is presented an “ordered” account, both through reading and having a meal, of what God did on that first occasion. During the course of the meal, most families are guided by a book called a *Haggadah*. This word means “the telling” and is taken from Exodus 13:8, *“And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt’”*. Although the book contains remarks and theories by revered rabbis here and there, it is primarily a straightforward account of God’s deliverance of His people Israel from bondage in Egypt, interspersed with wonderful psalms, and other Biblical passages—many of which reference God’s *yeshu'Ah*—His “salvation”, and the coming Messiah.

**At the heart of this “telling” as it has come down to our day is an addition called *Afikomen*.** The word comes from a Greek word, meaning literally “that which comes after” or even, “the one who came”. At the beginning of the seder three pieces of matza are placed into a three-fold pocket—but the piece going into the middle compartment is first broken. Part of this broken piece of unleavened bread is placed in the middle pocket; the other piece, the *Afikomen*, is wrapped up and hidden away. After the meal, the children will seek the *Afikomen*...and the one who finds it will be given a redemption-price reward. Then all the participants at the table eat a portion of the *Afikomen* for dessert. Modern-day matza (or matzo) is unleavened, pierced and striped from the heat in baking. According to the Mishna, the *Afikomen* is a substitute for the “Korban Pesach”—the Passover Sacrifice, which was the last thing eaten at seders during the First and Second Temple periods. It all seems so clear! A piece of unleavened bread, bruised and pierced is broken off, wrapped and hidden away...(yet is still present with the tri-partite “oneness” in the pocket). When it is found by those who have seek as little children, it brings great joy. There is much deep truth inserted by the Holy Spirit into the Hebrew traditions, yet there is still a veil over the hearts of most of our people, and they do not see. It has actually been claimed that there is ample indication regarding the tradition of the *Afikomen*, that Yeshua Himself may have instituted this practice, which then found its way into traditional observance because of the early Messianic Jews (See “The Meaning and Importance of the Jewish Holidays” by John Fischer, *Sharing Bible*, Messianic Vision, 1989, p.40.)

**Passover Week is also called in the Bible the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” (Hebrew: *Chag Matzot*).** It lasts for seven days, beginning with the *seder* on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Aviv/Nisan (the First Month). The first and last days of the week are to be observed as Sabbaths (Leviticus 23:7-8). The days between these two “Sabbaths” are called *chol ha'mo'ed*...which means the “common” or “every-day normal” period of time between two set-apart (i.e. “holy”) days. During this week Israel is commanded to eat *matzot*—“un-leavened” bread—nor is any leavening agent to be found in her dwellings for the seven days.

**BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THIS HOLY WEEK PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*For the Light of Life to shine into our dwellings and hearts...exposing any “leaven” which needs to be cleansed.**

**\*For Light to shine over *seder* tables in Israel and around the world, to reveal the Truth of the “Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world”—who was separated from the Father while remaining one with Him, born in Bethlehem (lit: “bread-house”), bruised and pierced, cut off from mankind and hidden in the earth—the Lamb of God who atones for and takes away the sin of humankind—Who may be found by all who become like little children and seek, and whose finding brings Life, and Nourishment and Joy!**

**\*For God's protection over Israel during this week when children are out of school and many families are out and about Israel enjoying the holidays.**

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### **THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION:**

*From ancient times there has been a weekly portion (Parasha) from the first five books of Moses (The Torah) and an ending (Haftarah) from the Prophets read on the Sabbath in synagogues around the world. This portion is given a Hebrew name drawn from the opening words of the Torah passage. An illustration of this practice appears to have been recorded in Luke 4:16 where Yeshua (Jesus) arrived in the synagogue in Nazareth and was asked to read the portion (Isaiah 61) from the Prophets. We have found that in perusing these weekly readings, not only are we provided opportunity to identify in the context of God's Word with millions of Jewish people around the world, but very often the Holy Spirit will illumine specific passages pertinent that week in our intercession for the Land and people of Israel. All texts are those of English translations of the Scriptures.*

### **READINGS FOR THE FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

#### **THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTIONS**

**DURING THE WEEK OF PASSOVER, THERE ARE READINGS EACH DAY IN THE SYNAGOGUES. WE HAVE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING LIST FOR THE USE OF THOSE WHO DURING THE COURSE OF THE WEEK MAY WISH TO READ FROM SOME OR ALL OF THESE PASSAGES.**

**Day 1 (Saturday 4 April): Exodus 12:21-51; Numbers 28:16-25; Joshua 3:5-7; 5:2—6:1: 6:27**

*The Exodus passage* recounts the first Passover, the slaying of the lamb and the placing of blood on the doorposts, the passing of YHVH through Egypt, the "skipping over" of those households with blood on the doors, the striking of the Firstborn of Egypt; the sending of Israel out of the Land, their going out arrayed as armies of the LORD 430 year to the day after being exiled to Egypt. *The Numbers reading* details the sacrifices to be offered on Passover during future observances (This reading will be repeated in some form each day throughout the week). *The Haftarah from Joshua* details the time, over forty years later, when the next generation, before entering at last into Canaan is required to be circumcised. After this is done and the reproach of Egypt was rolled off of them at Gilgal, the Children of Israel celebrate Passover in the Land on the plains of Jericho, the manna ceases, and the Commander of the Army of the LORD appears to send Joshua into the Land.

**Day 2 (Sunday 5 April): Leviticus 22:26—23:44; Numbers 28:16-25; II Kings 23: 1-9; 21-25**

*The Leviticus passage* enumerates the “Feasts of the LORD”—Shabbat, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, the Counting of the Omer and Shavuot (Weeks/Pentecost), Yom T’ruah (Festival of Shofars/Trumpets), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Sukkot (Booths/Tabernacles). *The II Kings Haftarah* relates a great revival in the days of King Josiah in Jerusalem, in which he cleansed the land of idolatry (as it were, leaven); then the people celebrated a wonderful Passover, unlike any which had gone before, because Josiah “*turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Torah of Moses*” (vs 25).

### **FIRST FRUITS**

**The first and seventh days of Passover Week are Sabbaths. This Sunday, the day after the first Passover “sabbath”—is the day on which most of present-day Judaism considers the Ceremony of First Fruits would have been performed (Leviticus 23:9-14). A sheaf (*omer*) of the first of the grain harvest was brought and waved before the LORD. It was on this day, the third day after His death, that Yeshua was raised and presented Himself as “*firstfruits from the dead*” to the Father**

**(I Corinthians 15:23).**

**This also marks the first day in the “Counting of the Omer” to *Shavuot*--the “Feast of Weeks”/ “Pentecost” (Leviticus 23:15).**

**Day 3 (Monday 6 April): Exodus 13:1-16; Numbers 28:19-25**

*The Exodus passage* recounts the LORD’s instructions immediately following the Children of Israel’s coming out on the night of the first Passover. Israel is admonished to consecrate to the LORD all the firstborn. She is regularly to remember this day in which she went out of Egypt, “out of the house of bondage”. She is to remember to celebrate this Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days each year.

**Day 4 (Tuesday 7 April): Exodus 22:25—23:19; Numbers 28:19-25**

*The Exodus passage* includes among a list of civil laws, a further instruction regarding celebration of three annual feasts to the LORD: the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, in the month of Aviv (First Month, *Nisan*) in the Spring; the *Feast of (Spring) Harvest* (*Shavuot/Pentecost*); and the *Feast of Ingathering* (*Sukkot* in the Fall). At these festivals, all males would appear before Adonai the LORD.

**Day 5 (Wednesday 8 April): Exodus 33:12—34:26; Numbers 28:19-25; Ezekiel 36:37—37:14**

*The Exodus passage* recounts Moses' pleading with the LORD to go with him into the promised land (after Israel had sinned with the calf and the LORD had refused to go); Moses' remaking of the tablets he had broken, his ascending Sinai where the LORD passes before him. Verse 18 recounts the LORD's admonition to observe the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, and the call for all men to appear before Him three times a year. *In the Ezekiel Haftarah* the LORD promises that exiled Israel shall one day be "like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast day," its ruined cities filled with men. Then comes the prophecy of the "Valley of Dry Bones", of "the whole house of Israel" receiving the breath of God and standing up as a Great Army. "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am YHVH, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I YHVH, have spoken it and performed it!" says YHVH" (Ezekiel 36:12b-14).

**Day 6 (Thursday 9 April): Exodus 9:1-14; Numbers 28:19-25**

*The Exodus passage* recounts the LORD's command to Pharaoh to "send My people away that they may serve Me." If Pharaoh refuses, the LORD will "make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt" and his hand of judgment will be on Egypt. After this occurs and Pharaoh's heart again becomes hard, God releases an outbreak of grievous sores on the Egyptians, then hardens the heart of Pharaoh. At the last, Moses rises early and stands before Pharaoh: "Thus says YHVH the Hebrew God, 'Send my people away, that they may serve Me, for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth'" (Exodus 9:13b-14).

**Day 7 (A "Sabbath." Friday 10 April): Exodus 13:17—15:26; Numbers 28:19-25**

**II Samuel 22:1-51**

*The Exodus passage* recounts the Children of Israel going forth in orderly ranks by way of the Red Sea, led by the LORD in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Pharaoh pursues them, the sea opens and they pass through, but the Egyptian armies are destroyed, and on the further shore they sing *Shir haYam* (The "Song of the Sea"), "Sing to YHVH for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and rider He has thrown into the sea!" Traveling on the LORD sweetens the bitter waters at Marah by having Moses throw a tree into it. The people are admonished, "If you diligently heed the voice of YHVH your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus

15:26). *The Haftarah from II Samuel* is a wonderful Psalm which “David spoke to the LORD...on the day that the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies” (This Psalm also appears in the Psalter as Psalm 18): “**The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in whom I will trust...I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies...Therefore I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing praises to Your name**” (II Samuel 22:1-4, 50).

[Day 8 (OBSERVED ONLY OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL) Saturday 11 April]

Deuteronomy 15:19—16:17; Numbers 28:19-25

Isaiah 10:32—12:6

השירים שיר

*Shir haShirim*—“Song of Songs”

In many places is customary that the SONG OF SONGS (Song of Solomon) be read during the Passover season—sometimes in the synagogue, sometimes in homes after the Seder meal, or preceding the beginning of Shabbat *Chol haMo’ed*.

**PESACH S’ME’AH!!**

**“Joyous Passover Blessings!!” to each of You!!**



***Martin and Norma Sarvis***  
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[Passover and the Week of the Festival of Unleavened Bread begins Friday evening April 3<sup>rd</sup>. The next reading in the regular cycle of Torah readings (*Shmini*—“Eighth”) will continue on 11 April.]

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