

2017

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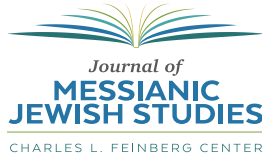
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### Recommended Citation

Walter, Robert (2017) "Passover in the Torah," *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies*: Vol. 2 , Article 4.  
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## Passover in the Torah

**Robert Walter**

The earliest chapters of Genesis record God’s initial dealings with humanity. He creates Adam and Eve, enjoys close fellowship with them, seeks them out after they had willfully disobeyed in the Garden of Eden, and promises to send a deliverer to redeem humankind and restore creation from chaos to peace. The thread of this promise is woven into all of the earliest events in Genesis, as if the Patriarchs are rehearsing the great deliverance that God will later bring about.

### PASSOVER IN GENESIS

In Genesis, Egypt is consistently portrayed as “a place that needs to be gotten out of, by God’s help, for the sake of preserving God’s people.”<sup>1</sup> And His ultimate goal is to bring them into the Promised Land. This has caused some scholars to sug-

1. Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 285.



gest that Genesis was actually written with Exodus in mind, as a prelude to show God's choosing of Israel as His people and to demonstrate that He is the supreme God, two vital elements in the Exodus account.<sup>2</sup> While there are no specific mentions of the Passover in Genesis, there are allusions to the Exodus. Therefore, as we embark on this study of the Passover in the Torah it's important to examine these Genesis passages to gain a greater understanding of the Passover's Exodus context.<sup>3</sup>

### *Abram*

The first of these occurrences in Genesis is in the account of Abram. God makes a covenant with Abram in Genesis 12:1–3 where He calls him to get up and go. Abram is to follow God to a specific Land and is promised that he will be made into a great nation and receive a great name, and that through him all the families of the earth will be blessed. In Genesis 15, God further establishes the covenant, promising to provide him a son, and giving boundaries for the aforementioned Land. This text also provides the first hint pointing to the Exodus:

God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. . . . Then in the fourth generation they will return here . . ." (Gen. 15:13–16)

Perhaps to show His sovereign faithfulness to His promises, or to indicate the troubled future that Abram's descendants would endure, God chooses to reveal to Abram certain details about the Exodus. His descendants will be oppressed and enslaved, strangers in a foreign land for four hundred years. God himself will judge

2. Enns, *Exodus*, 285.

3. For a more detailed overview of the Exodus as a paradigm for salvation as found in Genesis, see Enns' comments on Exodus 13:17–14:31 in Enns, *Exodus*, 279–89.



the nation oppressing them. The descendants will leave that foreign land with many possessions and return to the Land of Promise. There is no mention of the Passover, but there is a prediction of national deliverance and return to the Land, two major themes in the Exodus from Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

### *Joseph*

Perhaps the strongest foreshadowing of the Exodus in the Torah is found in the life of Joseph. In Genesis 37–50, we learn that Joseph is beloved by his father, rejected and hated by his brothers, sold into slavery for silver, wrongly accused, and convicted of crimes. Though he is blameless, he enters the depths of suffering in an Egyptian prison. It is from that lowest point that God turns Joseph's situation around, raising him from the pit and exalting him to a position that is answerable to Pharaoh alone.

Later in the account, famine strikes the region and Joseph encounters his brothers face to face, this time possessing the authority and ability to strike them down for what they had done to him. He instead shows mercy. As the brothers stand awestruck and afraid, Joseph comforts them with his understanding of God's sovereign hand at work in all that has happened. Joseph assures them,

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent

4. It should be noted that the covenant event of Genesis 15 between God and Abram, and the covenant event of Exodus 20 between God and Israel at Sinai have striking similarities. Sailhamer points out a number of these: (1) the similar wording of Genesis 15:7 and Exodus 20:2, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of . . .," introducing the covenant action of God that appeals to an earlier act of divine salvation; (2) fire and darkness accompanying God's presence at Sinai (Exod. 19:18; 20:18; Deut. 4:11) compared with the fire and darkness of Abram's vision (Gen. 15:12, 17); and (3) the common thread of the Exodus from Egypt that joins the two covenants (Gen. 15:14). See John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 1:173–74.



me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. (Gen. 45:5, 7)

In Joseph's view, God has used his trials for good. He highlights three results of his suffering: (1) the preservation of life, presumably for Egypt and others; (2) the preservation of a remnant, best explained as the Hebrew people; and (3) the coming of a great deliverance, which most likely points to the Exodus from Egypt.<sup>5</sup> Joseph later provides a similar reflection as he gives his brothers final instructions before his death:

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. . . . I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. . . . God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here. (Gen. 50:20, 24–25)

Here Joseph reiterates God's sovereignty throughout his trials, which has resulted in the preservation of life for many people, both Egyptians and descendants of Jacob. He also begins to prophesy concerning God visiting His people at a future time to bring them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. We again see the redemptive pattern of the Exodus presented to us in Genesis as Joseph appeals to the covenant promises that God made to the Patriarchs.<sup>6</sup>

5. While this final point on the "great deliverance" can be seen as finding its fulfillment in the rescue from the current famine in Joseph's time, the preservation of the covenant family carries with it the purpose of future promise fulfillment, especially in the Exodus. Hamilton suggests as much in Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 576. This view also makes sense when comparing the parallel statements of Joseph in Genesis 50:20, 24–25, with the preservation of life and a remnant of 45:5 paralleling what Joseph says brought about "this present result" in 50:20; and the "great deliverance" of 45:7 paralleling God's future "visit" in 50:24–25.

6. See Genesis 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 26:3–5; 35:12.



## THE GENESIS–EXODUS BRIDGE

As the story unfolds in the early chapters of Exodus, it is important to note the ongoing connections between the Genesis and Exodus narratives. There are three particular points that warrant mention, as they tie Joseph’s experiences in Egypt and his dying words in Genesis 50 to the Passover and Exodus more than 400 years later. First, the word for “take care of” or “visit” in 50:24–25 is a form of the Hebrew verb, פָּקַד *paqad*. The connotation is that God’s presence will be with Israel as He will visit them with the intent to aid and change their fortunes. Moving forward, this same Hebrew word is only used at key points throughout the Exodus narrative to describe God taking action to deliver. It is used in Exodus 3:16 when Moses is commissioned to go to the leaders of Israel and announce that God has remembered His people and *taken note of* their afflictions. In Exodus 4:29–31, as Moses and Aaron address the elders and proclaim that God has *taken note of* their afflictions, the people believe, bow low, and worship God. And in Exodus 13:19, as the exhumed bones of Joseph are being carried off with the redeemed nation, Moses quotes Joseph’s dying words from Genesis 50:25. It appears that Moses understood that Joseph’s prophetic words were coming to pass. We can surmise with a certain level of confidence that the author of Exodus uses פָּקַד, *paqad*, in these key texts to demonstrate the promise-fulfillment relationship and build a bridge between the patriarchal narratives of Genesis and the redemptive Passover event in Exodus.<sup>7</sup>

Next, the word for “to bring up” in Genesis 50:24–25 is the Hebrew verb אָלַהּ, *alah*, which Joseph uses to indicate how God *will bring* Israel *up* from Egypt and also how the Israelites *will bring* Joseph’s bones with them at their deliverance. The word is used a number of times in the Exodus narrative to refer to God’s

7. See Bruce K. Waltke, with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 627; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, trans. David Green (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 324; and K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 1B:930. Also, for the rabbinic tradition that views פָּקַד, *paqad*, as a sort of password passed on from generation to generation in Egypt, see note on Genesis 50:24 in Nosson Scherman, ed., *The Chumash: The Torah, Haftaros and Five Megillos*, ArtScroll Series (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1993), 289.



intentions to set Israel free and *bring* His people *up* to the Land, most notably in Exodus 3:8 as He speaks to Moses from the burning bush.

Lastly, the first biblical mention of the three Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all together is found in Genesis 50:24. In combining the three, Joseph encapsulates the covenant promises that God has made to them and begins to prophesy how God will fulfill those promises by visiting and transferring Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. Joseph casts the hope of the Patriarchs onto the deliverance from Egypt as he predicts the Exodus (cf. Heb. 11:22). Just like the limited use of the word פָּקַד, *paqad*, so also the only mention of the three Patriarchs together is included at the end of Genesis, which later appears at key points in the Exodus narrative (Exod. 2:23–25; 3:6–8, 16–17; 6:1–5, 8).

Words matter and it appears that leading up to the redemption experienced through the Exodus, פָּקַד, *paqad*; אָלַח, *'alah*; and “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” are used to demonstrate the promise-fulfillment relationship between Joseph’s dying words and the redemptive events of the Exodus. It’s safe to say that with his dying words, Joseph stands as the covenantal bridge between the family under the leadership of the Patriarchs and the nation under the leadership of Moses. His words set the stage for how God would take redemptive action, visit His people to set them free, and transfer them from a place of bondage to a place of freedom.

### *Passover in Exodus*

The first five chapters of Exodus trace the path toward the great deliverance that will ultimately come at the first Passover. Israel has grown in number while living in Egypt, and their situation takes a turn for the worse when a new Pharaoh arises who knows nothing of Joseph (Exod. 1:8). Great persecution and affliction ensues for Israel, and in the midst of it, Moses is born. God sovereignly chooses and prepares Moses from birth to serve as the redemptive figure through whom He will fulfill His promises.



Israel's cries are heard by God and He begins to take covenant action (2:23–25). He speaks with Moses from the burning bush, and gives him a divine mission to go to Pharaoh and the elders of Israel to proclaim Israel's liberty (3:1–22). When the elders hear Moses' report, they immediately believe and worship (4:29–31). Pharaoh, on the other hand, questions the identity, nature, and character of the God of Israel and hard-heartedly refuses to acquiesce to God's bidding (5:2). Under the duress of increased labor, even Israel begins to question Moses' intentions (5:21).

### *The Four Promises*

As the now distressed and confused Moses seeks understanding and insight from God, God answers by pointing to what He is about to do. In Exodus 6:6–7 we read:

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, "I am the LORD, and *I will bring you out* from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and *I will deliver you* from their bondage. *I will also redeem you* with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then *I will take you* for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." (emphasis added)

The four highlighted promises serve as the basis for the four cups used during the traditional Jewish celebration of the Passover Seder. Jewish sources interpret these four promises as the backbone of the entire Passover experience, each one representing a stage in the progressive unfolding of Israel's redemption.<sup>8</sup> The first two promises, that God will bring Israel out and deliver His people from Egyptian bondage, speak of how He will physically transfer Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land,<sup>9</sup> and in

8. See note on Exodus 6:6–7 in Scherman, *The Chumash*, 319.

9. See Kaiser's comments on the use of "to bring out" in Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 1:394.





the process change the status of His people from slave to free.

The third promise is that God will redeem Israel. The Hebrew verb גָּאֵל, *ga'al*, used here can carry the sense of repurchasing something that once belonged to you. It points to a transaction between parties where the purchaser pays a price, and as a result takes ownership and possession of that which is purchased.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, through the Passover, God will pay a price (the Lamb) to repurchase Israel His firstborn (Exod. 4:22) from slavery, taking ownership and possession of His people and bringing them into the Land.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth promise is that God will take Israel to Himself. The Hebrew verb לָקַח, *laqach*, used here is found over one thousand times in the Old Testament and means “to take, or receive,” but often its nuance is determined by the words with which it is used.<sup>12</sup> Here God takes Israel to be His people; He will be their God. This promise ultimately points to the close, special relationship that God and His people will enjoy beyond their redemption.<sup>13</sup> Christian and rabbinic sources view this promise being fulfilled at Sinai when God “takes” Israel, entering into a covenant contract, even a “marriage,” with His people as they accept His Torah.<sup>14</sup>

As we keep reading, we see that there are two more promises in Exodus 6:8 that refer directly to God bringing Israel into the Promised Land and giving His people the Land as a possession:

*I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD. (emphasis added)*

To summarize the six promises in Exodus 6:6–8, the first three (bring you out, deliver you, redeem you) relate to Israel’s

10. R. Laird Harris, “גָּאֵל,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:300.

11. See Kaiser’s comments on the use of גָּאֵל, *ga'al*, in Kaiser, “Exodus,” 1:394.

12. Walter C. Kaiser, “לָקַח,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:1125.

13. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 2:172.

14. See note on Exodus 6:6–7 in Scherman, *The Chumash*, 319.



condition in Egypt before the crossing of the Red Sea, and the fourth promise (take you to Myself), plus the fifth and sixth promises (bring you to the Land, give Land as a possession) relate to Israel's experience beyond the crossing of the Red Sea.

### *Faithful Obedience and the Promises*

When we consider divine promises, it is important to ask a couple of questions: When God makes us a promise, what is our responsibility? What are we to do with that promise? Pause to think about that for a moment. The simple answer is to believe. We are to believe and have faith that God will indeed come through on the promise that He has made. In light of the fact that the redemptive act at Passover is based on God's promises to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and to all Israel, we conclude that faith has always been a key element in redemption. From the moment the promises are mentioned in Exodus 6 through the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, the faithful obedience of Israel is on display as God faithfully fulfills His promises (see Heb. 11:28–29).

### *The Passover*

The tenth and final plague begins the climb to the Torah's redemptive crescendo. In Exodus 11 God pronounces judgment upon Egypt, namely through the slaying of all firstborns in the land. God then gives the specifics of the final plague to Moses in three sections in chapters 12 and 13. He describes how Israel is to observe the first Passover in Egypt (12:1–13), how His people are to observe it throughout their future generations (12:14–20; 13:1–16), and who is to observe it (12:42–49). Moses then relays God's instructions to Israel (12:21–27), and we see the event unfold as God has described (12:28–41).

The Israelites are to choose a one-year-old, unblemished male lamb, bring it into their homes to examine it from the



tenth day to the fourteenth day of the first month. When twilight on the fourteenth comes, each household will sacrifice their lamb, take its blood in a basin, dip hyssop into the blood, and apply the blood to the lintel and two doorposts of their home, remaining inside the home for the remainder of the night. They will roast the entire lamb and eat it in haste, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, burning whatever remains the following morning.

This is Israel's moment of truth. All of the promises of deliverance for God's people are narrowing down to this moment. The blood of the Passover lamb is the hinge upon which their fulfillment turns. They have received the instructions; now the people have to exercise their faith that God will come through. By faith they have to examine and slay the lamb. By faith they have to take its blood and put it on their doors. By faith they have to wait upon the Lord. The blood stands as a testimony to their faith in God's redemptive promise and power.

That night the destroyer slays the firstborn of every human and beast in Egypt. When it comes to the homes marked by the blood of the lamb, God promises to "pass over" (פָּסַח, *pasach*) those homes. This verbal form of the noun פֶּסַח, *pesach*, where we get the name "Passover," appears only four times with this sense in the Tanakh (Exod. 12:13, 23, 27; Isa. 31:5). Elsewhere, it can be translated as "to have compassion," "to protect," "to skip over," or "to hedge, straddle." Some scholars suggest a more protective nuance in these passages and see God as protecting the entrances of the homes, not allowing the destroyer to enter.<sup>15</sup> A passage like Exodus 12:23 makes more sense then, as it reads:

For when the LORD goes through to smite the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, and the LORD will *protect* the door and not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home.<sup>16</sup> (emphasis added)

This view ultimately puts God in a more active position as

15. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 156; Mark F. Rooper, *Leviticus*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 3A:285.

16. Translation quoted from Levine, *Leviticus*, 285.



defender. Rather than skipping over and passing homes by, He is instead standing between the plague and the faithful, between the judgment and the redeemed, with the shed blood serving as the basis for His sparing the firstborn males of that home. This is why we believe that the blood of the lamb is a prophetic portrait or type of the “Lamb of God” to come.

The next morning Pharaoh arises and expels Moses and Israel from Egypt. The first three Exodus 6 promises have been fulfilled. Israel’s redemptive price is paid with the blood of the lamb. She is released from bondage, and promptly departs that land, with Joseph’s bones in tow, plundering the Egyptians of silver and gold as she leaves.

As Israel departs Egypt, Pharaoh’s heart is hardened and he pursues Israel with the intent to enslave the people once again. God leads Israel to the Red Sea, protecting and guiding His people with the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. The Egyptian army draws closer to the seemingly vulnerable Israelites, when God steps in and executes one final act of judgment and deliverance. As Pharaoh and the Egyptian army are held at bay by the pillar of fire, God miraculously parts the Red Sea, allowing Israel to cross over on dry ground. Pharaoh gives chase through the sea, the waters envelop the army of Egyptians, and the people of Israel watch their former oppressors finally defeated as their corpses are washed upon the shore.<sup>17</sup> Israel rejoices greatly as the people enjoy their first taste of freedom and nationhood.

## PASSOVER IN THE TORAH BEYOND THE EXODUS

The Passover and Exodus have become a reference point in the nation’s history and identity throughout the rest of the Torah. Often when specific commandments are given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, God is referred to with a qualifying reference to how He has brought Israel

17. While Exodus 14:28 does not explicitly mention whether or not Pharaoh himself was in the sea, Psalm 136:15a suggests that he may have been. It states, “But he overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea.”



out of Egypt.<sup>18</sup> These books also chronicle the development of the annual memorial celebration of the Passover. Specific guidelines for when, where, and how to observe the Passover are laid out and warrant further attention as they impact much of what we read in the rest of Scripture.

### *Passover in Leviticus*

Leviticus 23 lays out the annual cycle of God's appointed times that the people of Israel are to observe throughout their generations. The list of these appointed times includes the weekly Sabbath, followed by four specific celebrations in the spring and three in the fall. Passover is the first of these annual feasts mentioned. Leviticus 23:4–8 reads:

These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD's Passover. Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.

With the central elements of the lamb and unleavened bread both commemorating the Passover event in Egypt, there is some uncertainty as to whether or not the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread refer to two separate appointed times or if they refer to the same appointed time. They seem to be held as distinct in Leviticus 23:4–8. However, many scholars view them as distinct celebrations that are joined together and used

18. See Exodus 16:6; 18:1; 20:2; 29:46; 32:11; Leviticus 11:45; 19:36; 22:33; 25:38; 26:13; Numbers 15:41; 20:16; 21:5; 23:22; 24:8; Deuteronomy 4:20; 5:6, 15; 6:12; 7:18–19; 8:14; 9:26; 13:5, 10; 16:1; 20:1; 26:8; and 29:25.



interchangeably very early on.<sup>19</sup> One Jewish view sees more of a grammatical distinction and suggests that the term “Passover” refers to the specific offering and the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to the appointed time itself.<sup>20</sup> The Passover sacrifice will be offered at twilight on the fourteenth, which in Jewish tradition is somewhere between 3:00 and 3:30 P.M. (m. Pesah. 5:1), and then prepared and eaten during the festive meal that follows as the evening of the fifteenth is ushered in. The earliest portions of Scripture show more of a distinction between the two, while they are clearly merged in Deuteronomy and consistently referred in this way afterwards.<sup>21</sup>

This helps us better understand the place of Passover in the shaping of Israel’s national worship, as the first and seventh days will be Sabbaths marked by holy gatherings, with Israel making daily burnt offerings during that time. Also, each of these appointed times has both a material and spiritual significance. The feasts are tied to the various agricultural harvest times when Israel will offer the best fruits, produce, and livestock and thank God for providing for them.

The celebration during these eight days highlights some of the great themes of Scripture, including sanctification, repen-

19. Rooker, *Leviticus*, 285. On the separateness of the two festivals, see J. Licht, s.v. “pesah,” in *’Entsiklopediah Mikra’it* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1950–88), 6:523–24; A. Rofé, *Mavo’ le-sefer Devarim* (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1988), 38–40; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), at 12:14–20 (p. 57). For examples of how the two were used interchangeably by the time of the New Testament, see Luke 22:1, 7, and Mark 14:12.

20. For comments on the traditional Jewish view, see Levine, *Leviticus*, 156. The ArtScroll translation of Leviticus 23:5–6 (Scherman, *The Chumash*) is also informative of this view. It reads, “In the first month on the fourteenth of the month in the afternoon is the time of the pesach-offering to Hashem. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the Festival of Matzos to Hashem; you shall eat matzos for a seven-day period.”

21. For specific mentions of Passover and Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament, see Exodus 12:1–13, 14–20, 21–28, 40–51; 13:3–10; Leviticus 23:5–8; Numbers 28:16–23; Deuteronomy 16:1–7; Ezekiel 45:21; Ezra 6:20–22; 2 Chronicles 30:2–15; and 35:17. A case could be made that the command in Exodus 12:14 for Israel to celebrate the Passover as a “feast” (פֶּסַח, *chag*) shows the intent to combine them from the inception, due to the limited use of this term when paired with specific appointed times. Normally, in the Passover context only Unleavened Bread is designated as a feast. They become more clearly fused beginning in the Leviticus 23 portion. See Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 371.



tance, atonement, and God's presence with His people. Through these appointed times the nation will gather together to honor God for His bountiful spiritual and material provision, making the connection between Israel's relationship with God and the bounty produced by the Promised Land.

These appointed times contain prophetic significance as well, and we find major events take place on or around them in the New Testament. Yeshua's death, burial, and resurrection all take place in relation to the Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs during the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost). In the context of Leviticus 23, Passover is the first of the annual appointed times. It reminds the children of Israel of their deliverance from Egypt and points forward to ultimate deliverance from sin through Yeshua, "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7).

#### *Passover in Numbers*

Interestingly, Numbers 9:1–14 records the Torah's only mention of Israel's observance of the Passover beyond Egypt. This section also mentions an added measure of grace for those who are ritually unclean and unable to observe the Passover at the prescribed time. Instead of observing it on the fourteenth of the first month, they will celebrate it on the fourteenth of the second month. This tradition became known as *Pesach Sheni* (Second Passover), and we see it observed in the Bible only during the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:1–27). It's also important to note that this exception only applies to the Passover sacrifice on the fourteenth and not to the observance of the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is probably the strongest biblical evidence that shows the two as distinct.<sup>22</sup> They are otherwise viewed as one and the same.

Later in Numbers 28–29, specific details are provided for how Israel is to offer particular sacrifices at the various prescribed times. These include the regular daily, the weekly Sabbath, the monthly New Moon, and the different annual festival sacrifices.

22. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 371.



The daily burnt offerings to be offered during the seven days of Passover, as mentioned in Leviticus 23:8, are expanded upon in Numbers 28:16–25. Each day two bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs will be offered as whole burnt offerings (עֹלָה, *'olah*), along with their accompanying grain offerings. Unlike the Passover lamb offered on the fourteenth, these burnt offerings are not to be eaten by the priests or the people.

The people will also offer one goat as a sin offering (חַטָּאת, *chatta'it*) to make atonement (Num. 28:22), which is eaten by the priests only. This atoning sin offering is most likely meant to assure the ritual purity of the people as they worship, and is distinct from the Passover lamb offered on the fourteenth.<sup>23</sup> According to Numbers 29:39, these special festival sacrifices are in addition to the daily votive, freewill, burnt, grain, drink, and peace offerings. These festival sacrifices serve as the basis for the Rabbinic tradition developed later regarding the *hagigah* sacrifice, referring to the one Lamb offered for the entire nation.<sup>24</sup>

### *Passover in Deuteronomy*

In Deuteronomy 16:1–17, we find three components of Passover addressed: (1) the sacrifices offered during Passover and Unleavened Bread; (2) the specific location where the nation will offer these sacrifices; and (3) that Passover will be one of the three pilgrim feasts, along with *Shavuot* (Weeks) and *Sukkot* (Tabernacles). Each of these demonstrates how the Passover became more of a national celebration as Israel entered the Land.

The sacrifices mentioned in 16:1–4 use wording that is unique compared to the previous passages under discussion. Here the Passover offering is to be taken “from the flock and the herd” (v. 2), which will include sheep, goats, and oxen. The Passover offering is also the object referred to in verse 3, where

23. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 242.

24. See chapter 10, “Passover in Rabbinic Writings,” by Zhava Glaser; see also Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 9–10.





the text states that “seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread.” This implies that the Passover would be eaten for seven days. If the Passover offering is to be a sheep or goat (Exod. 12:5), and offered only on the fourteenth and completely consumed before the next morning (Exod. 12:10; Deut. 16:4), then how do we reconcile what’s stated here in Deuteronomy? There is no clear answer other than suggesting that the word “Passover” is being used as a general umbrella term under which all of the special festival and daily sacrifices fall, including the burnt offerings and peace offerings mentioned in Numbers 28–29.<sup>25</sup>

This portion also mandates that Israel celebrate and offer the Passover at a specific location. Here it is designated as the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. This phrase is used a number of times in Deuteronomy (12:5; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2), looking ahead to Israel’s conquest and settlement of the Land when worship will be centralized in one location. Clearly Jerusalem is in view, as 2 Chronicles 12:13 states later, since the Tabernacle and Temple will be located there. In that place God’s presence will be manifest as he draws near to the people and they draw near to Him.

Finally, in Deuteronomy 16:16–17 we see that Passover is one of the three pilgrim feasts, along with Shavuot and Sukkot, when all the males are to go up to Jerusalem to bring their offerings, not coming “empty-handed”:

Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

There are a number of similarities between the Deuteronomy 16 passage and Exodus 23:14–19 and 34:18–25. Looking at all three sections together we learn that Israel is to eat unleavened bread for seven days to remember the Exodus from Egypt

25. This explanation may also help in interpreting John 18:28. See chapter 5, “Passover in the Gospel of John,” by Mitch Glaser.



(Exod. 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:3), offer the blood of the sacrifice without unleavened bread and leave none of its fat overnight (Exod. 23:18; 34:25; Deut. 16:4), and rest on the seventh day (Exod. 34:21; Deut. 16:8). Only Exodus 34:19–20 contains the additional command to redeem the firstborn of every womb, memorializing the tenth plague.

Perhaps the most important point here is that Passover/Unleavened Bread, Shavuot, and Sukkot are each designated with the word usually translated “feast” (חַג, *chag*), but more is literally “pilgrimage.” This designation, which is also used for only these three appointed times in Leviticus 23, implies an actual journey that a worshipper takes to a specific cultic site.<sup>26</sup> With the command in each section not to come empty-handed, and cast in the context of Deuteronomy, these three pilgrim feasts portray God as Israel’s sovereign King, and the pilgrim Israelite males as His humble servants visiting His residence to pay homage.<sup>27</sup> That Passover is included as one of these pilgrimages at such an early stage in Israel’s covenant history again emphasizes how the focus of Passover observance shifted from individual homes to a national celebration in Jerusalem as time went on.

## PASSOVER AND REDEMPTION IN THE TORAH

This “great deliverance” of Israel from Egypt is a blueprint for how God redeems His people throughout Scripture. In this section we will briefly look at how the pattern found in the Torah is fulfilled for individual believers in Yeshua today, and even points to the final redemption of the nation of Israel in the future.

### *Personal Redemption through Yeshua*

God has used the shed blood of the spotless lamb to purchase and regain ownership of the enslaved Israelites, as their

26. Levine, *Leviticus*, 156.

27. Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 159.



true owner. It is precisely this pattern that is followed in the New Testament. Yeshua, God's only begotten Son, bursts onto the scene to pay the necessary redemptive price with His own blood, and to proclaim liberty and set free those enslaved to sin—transferring them from the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom. The sacrificial death of Yeshua is brimming with Passover connections. John declares that Yeshua is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua all took place during the Passover / Unleavened Bread week.<sup>28</sup> And Paul boldly declares, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Cor. 5:7 ESV).

The entire New Testament portrayal of Yeshua's sacrifice also seems to follow the pattern of the four promises from Exodus 6:6–7 outlined above. Through Yeshua, God sets His people free from slavery to sin, brings His people out from under the burdens of sin, and pays the redemptive price for sin. Even the later promise from Exodus 6:8 of God taking His people to Himself and bringing them into the Promised Land serve as a template for the experience of the New Covenant believer as we are His possession as well, being guided toward our promised inheritance (Eph. 1:14).<sup>29</sup>

### *Israel's National Redemption through Yeshua*

There is a method of Bible interpretation known as *typology*, or pattern fulfillment. It suggests that Old Testament ideas, events, objects, or people serve as a pattern for a greater fulfillment that comes later in God's redemptive history.

It appears that Israel's national redemption at Passover may serve as a type for both the redemption experienced by believers and also for Israel's future national redemption through Yesh-

28. For further details on Yeshua's death during the Feasts of Passover / Unleavened Bread, see chapter 4, “Passover in the Gospel of Luke,” by Darrell L. Bock, and chapter 5, “Passover in the Gospel of John,” by Mitch Glaser.

29. I suggest that going through the waters of baptism relate to, and, in a way, reenact the crossing of the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2); and the parallels between the giving of the Torah at Sinai and the giving of the Spirit in Acts 2 are too many to mention here, but they reinforce the similarities shared by those redeemed by the lamb in Egypt and those redeemed by Yeshua.



ua. Crucial to this suggestion is viewing the Joseph narrative in Genesis and Passover narrative in Exodus as bound together in one continuous narrative that holistically points to the larger redemption achieved through the Messiah. We can trace the events from Joseph through the Passover and compare them to the Messianic ministry of Yeshua to help flesh out this idea.

Both Jewish and Christian sources view Joseph as a type of the Messiah. While the New Testament does not explicitly refer to Joseph as a type, many Christian sources point out the numerous parallels between Joseph and Yeshua, highlighted by God's use of the suffering of each to achieve His purposes.<sup>30</sup> In Jewish thought, the concept of the *Mashiach ben Yosef* (Messiah son of Joseph) took shape during the Talmudic era, between 200 and 500 c.e. In rabbinic theology, this Messianic figure is believed to suffer and die in the eschatological battle between the people of Israel and their enemies, only to be resurrected by the kingly messiah figure, *Mashiach ben David* (Messiah son of David), at the inauguration of the Messianic age (b. Sukkah 52a). In both views, Joseph serves as a suffering-servant-type figure.

With this in mind, we can highlight some key points in the Joseph and Exodus narratives. First, Joseph is rejected by his brothers because of his prophetic dreams that foretell his exaltation and their submission to him. As a result, he suffers greatly but rises to prominence due to God's sovereign hand working to preserve life, to preserve a remnant, and to bring about a great deliverance (Gen. 45:5, 7; 50:20, 24–25). The rejection of Joseph ultimately results in God's covenant people leaving the Promised Land and residing in a foreign land for more than 400 years. As mentioned above, with his dying words Joseph utters a statement of prophetic hope and promise for Israel. The chosen people will not remain in Egypt, but instead God will reverse their exile. Through the Passover, Israel experiences a national redemption and deliverance. Israel is freed from slavery and brought back to the Promised Land.

There are striking similarities between this outline and the outworking of the New Covenant through Messiah's two com-

30. For example, see comments in K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, outline section XII, "Jacob's Family: Joseph and His Brothers (37:2–50:26)."



ings. Like Joseph, Yeshua is beloved by the Father. Just as Joseph is rejected by his brothers because of his exalted role,<sup>31</sup> Yeshua goes to His own and His own do not receive Him, instead rejecting His claim to be Messiah (John 1:11; Mark 14:62). In John 15:25, Yeshua describes this rejection as “baseless hatred,” claiming that it fulfills what is written in Psalm 69:4 (verse 5 in the Hebrew Bible).

Just as he has done with Joseph, God has sovereignly used the suffering of Yeshua to bring blessings and life (Acts 4:17). And just as Israel’s leaving the Promised Land is somehow related to Joseph’s rejection by his brothers and the redemptive role he eventually plays in Egypt, so the nation of Israel has experienced exile from the Promised Land as a result of their leadership’s rejection of the Messiah Yeshua.<sup>32</sup> Within a generation of Yeshua’s rejection by Israel’s leadership, the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., and the Jewish people were dispersed as the Romans leveled Jerusalem in 135 C.E. Interestingly, one of the primary reasons given by Rabbinic sources to explain this expulsion of the Jewish people from Israel is the “baseless hatred” each man had for his neighbor (see b. Yoma 9b). There is truth in that statement, as evidenced by the many factions of Jewish people during the Second Temple period. Further the Jewish leaders were guilty of a far greater *baseless hatred* of the one who claimed to be the promised Messiah.

Thankfully, for the past two thousand years God has not left Israel without hope. Just as Joseph transmitted words of hope about a visit from God and a great deliverance for His people, so too there are a number of words of hope for the nation of Israel in the New Testament beyond their rejection of Messiah. In Matthew 23:37–39 (cf. Luke. 13:34–35), Yeshua asserts that Jerusalem will see Him again when she greets Him with blessings. In Acts 3:19–21, Peter looks forward to the return of Yeshua and the full restoration of all things as God told through the holy prophets of old, a reality that includes the fulfillment of all of Israel’s national promises. And in Romans 11:25–27, Paul

31. Sailhamer notes that Joseph’s brothers rejected him specifically because they despised his dreams, which cast them as bowing down to Joseph. See Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 274.

32. Michael L. Brown, *The Real Kosher Jesus* (Lake Mary, FL: FrontLine, 2012), 55.



clearly speaks of the future redemption that the nation of Israel will experience at the return of Yeshua.

Joseph's words of hope find fulfillment through the blood of the lamb at Passover as Israel is set free from Egypt and brought back to the Promised Land. The New Testament's words of hope will find fulfillment through the blood of Yeshua our Passover Lamb when the nation of Israel returns to the Land and is redeemed by His blood (Deut. 30:1–10; Ezek. 37:1–14; Rom. 11:25–27). This includes the redemption already provided through Yeshua in the first coming, characterized by many nations experiencing the blessings of the New Covenant, and it will find its completion when God visits once again to release the nation of Israel from bondage to sin at the second coming of Messiah. God will once again use what was meant for evil to bring about a great deliverance for Israel.

## CONCLUSION

The Passover is the fundamental act that defines the very meaning of redemption in the Torah. It is the story of how God sets His people free from slavery and bondage, how He reacquires that which is His, and how He brings His people to Himself to enjoy a close covenant relationship. As members of the New Covenant, we have much to consider when we read, study, and celebrate the Passover. Not only are we looking back to this event as a remembrance of what God did for Israel in the past, and what God has done for us through Yeshua, but we are also rehearsing what God will do at the Messiah's return. We are looking ahead to that glorious moment when the nation of Israel, that for so long has rejected the Messiah, will experience its ultimate release from sin, slavery, and death.

The Passover as described in the Torah has become the pattern whereby all of Israel will understand the meaning of redemption. The national redemption of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage looks forward to a greater redemption that has come through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who takes



away the sin of the world. Therefore, the entirety of the Exodus may be viewed as a type of what was to come and has now come to be. The Exodus and the Passover are the redemptive reference point for the Jewish people throughout the ages and are even viewed in this way by the Messiah Himself in the Gospels.

Our journey continues as we now turn to the historical books of the Old Testament, the *Ketuvim*, or the Writings, and we shall look at the way the Passover is observed in this great section of Scripture.

| Joseph   | Yeshua  |
|--|---|
| Beloved by his father (Gen. 37:3-4)  | Beloved by the Father (Matt. 3:17)  |
| Rejected by his brothers (Gen. 37:18-35)   | Rejected by His own (Luke 19:14; John 1:11; 15:24-25)   |
| Suffering yields preservation of life for nations (Egyptians, Israelites, etc.) (Gen. 45:5, 7; 50:20, 24-25)             | Suffering yields life for nations (John 3:16; Rom. 11:11-12, 15)  |
| Suffering yields preservation of remnant of Hebrew people (Gen. 45:5, 7; 50:20, 24-25), albeit exiled from Promised Land | Suffering yields preservation of remnant of Jewish believers (Rom. 11:5); albeit exiled from Promised Land  |
| Suffering sets the stage for great deliverance for nation of Israel, and visit from God (Gen. 45:5, 7; 50:20, 24-25)     | Suffering sets the stage for future great deliverance for nation of Israel, through return visit from God (Matt. 23:37-39; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 11:25-27) |
| Israel's national redemption through the Passover (Exod. 12-13)  | Israel's national redemption through Yeshua "our Passover" (Rom. 11:25-27)  |