

What is this service all about?ⁱ

Commentary on Parashat BO {Come/Go} (Exodus 10:1-13:16)

And הוֹרָה said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh... (Exodus 10:1)

This same night continues to be a night when ADONAI keeps vigil for all the people of Isra'el through all their generations (Shemot 12:42b)

And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'

"When your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this ceremony?' say, 'It is the sacrifice of ADONAI's Pesach [Passover], because [ADONAI] passed over the houses of the people of Isra'el in Egypt, when he killed the Egyptians but spared our houses' ... This was a night when ADONAI kept vigil to bring them out of the land of Egypt, and this same night continues to be a night when ADONAI keeps vigil for all the people of Isra'el through all their generations" (Shemot 12:26-27,42).

Stubbornness had resulted in the death of the firstborn children in *Mitzrayim*. In every generation the selfishness, obstinacy and willfulness of parents result in a great price paid by the children. America is no exception—millions upon millions of innocent of unborn children pay with their life for our generation's promiscuity. I am a member of the generation that took off the bras, accepted all forms of contraceptives, legalized abortion, hailed the Beatles and the Rolling Stones (disregarding their immoral behavior), smoked pot and took hashish in brownies! Our children may be at risk and we might be responsible! Will our firstborn child be required of us?

Adonai had said to Moshe: "Then you are to tell Pharaoh: 'ADONAI says, "Isra'el is my firstborn son. I have told you to let my son go in order to worship me, but you have refused to let him go. Well, then, I will kill your firstborn son!" (Exodus 4:22-23). Adonai Eloheicha is just! He warns even Pharaoh of impending danger and gives opportunity for repentance. Our G-d is an awesome G-d.

Pharaoh refused and now exactly what G-d had promised would happen did happen. Here are the details:

"say, 'It is the sacrifice of ADONAI's Pesach [Passover], because [ADONAI] passed over the houses of the people of Isra'el in Egypt, when he killed the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" The people of Isra'el bowed their heads and worshipped. Then the people of Isra'el went and did as ADONAI had ordered Moshe and Aharon - that is what they did. At midnight ADONAI killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh sitting on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. Pharaoh got up in the night, he, all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was horrendous wailing in Egypt; for there wasn't a single house without someone dead in it. He summoned Moshe and Aharon by night and said, "Up and leave my people, both you and the people of Isra'el; and go, serve ADONAI as you said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as you said; and get out of here! But bless me, too." The Egyptians pressed to send the people out of the land quickly, because they said, "Otherwise we'll all be dead!" The people took their dough before it had become leavened and wrapped their kneading bowls in their clothes on their shoulders. The people of Isra'el had done what Moshe had said - they had asked the Egyptians to give them silver and gold jewelry and clothing; and ADONAI had made the Egyptians so favorably disposed toward the people that they had let them have whatever they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians." (Shemot 12:27-36)

Delivered from the plague of death by the blood of the Passover lamb, the children of Israel greeted the dawn of their redemption with new trust born of experience. The night before, they were timid slaves cowering behind locked doors. Now they threw open their doors and windows to the morning sun and rejoiced in their deliverance. Awed by the power of the Almighty that had protected them from the death angel, they were now ready to follow *Moshe*, His servant, wherever He said to. They were now ready to "BO" (go).

That very morning, the Egyptians, fearful of the L-rd's further wrath, begged our people to leave the country immediately. There was no time to prepare food for the journey. They bound up their unleavened dough, still in the kneading bowls, and strapped it to their backs. With this meager supply of food, they set out from Egypt with their wives, their little ones, their aged, their flocks, and all they possessed. They left nothing behind, and their beasts of burden were weighed down with the riches pressed upon them by their frightened Egyptian neighbors.

Four hundred and thirty years earlier, seventy people had come into the land of *Mitzrayim* with *Ya'akov*. This day a mighty multitude, the army of ADONAI, went out. Scripture tells us that six hundred thousand men left on that day. Their mothers, wives, and children made that number almost two million. This newly formed nation would wander in the desert for forty years. A whole generation would grow old and die before they entered Canaan, the land that flowed with the milk of goats and the honey of figs. But they relied on G-d's promise that it would come to pass, and they already had His instructions on what to do in the future.

“ADONAI spoke to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt; he said, ‘You are to begin your calendar with this month; it will be the first month of the year for you.’ Speak to all the assembly of Isra'el and say, ‘On the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb or kid for his family, one per household - except that if the household is too small for a whole lamb or kid, then he and his next-door neighbor should share one, dividing it in proportion to the number of people eating it. Your animal must be without defect, a male in its first year, and you may choose it from either the sheep or the goats. You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, and then the entire assembly of the community of Isra'el will slaughter it at dusk. They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the two sides and top of the door-frame at the entrance of the house in which they eat it. That night, they are to eat the meat, roasted in the fire; they are to eat it with matzah and maror. Don't eat it raw or boiled, but roasted in the fire, with its head, the lower parts of its legs and its inner organs. Let nothing of it remain till morning; if any of it does remain, burn it up completely.’” (Shemot 12:1-10)

The word “*keep vigil*” (KJV, *observed*) used in Exodus 12:42 comes from the Hebrew verb *shamar*, which means “to keep watch.” (e.g., *shomer*). Even as the L-rd kept watch over the blood-protected homes of the children of Israel on that first Passover, we, in turn, are to keep watch on each annual Passover night of remembrance. It is to be a memorial forever. He commanded the annual memorial of the Passover observance so that our Jewish people might reflect regularly upon all He has done on our people's behalf. In all our goings in and goings out we are to remember the L-rd, we are to rehearse and retell what He has done for us, we are to “*re-live*” the events of the great redemption He has done for our forefathers (*Avot*).

The L-rd also gave specific details of how we are to celebrate the anniversary of our redemption:

1. *The whole community of Isra'el is to keep it (the Pesach).* (Exodus 12:47).
2. They must not allow any *goy* to eat the *Pesach*, that is, no one who was uncircumcised or outside the covenant (Exodus 12:43-45).
3. They must eat the *Pesach* in one house, that is, a lamb for a household. The household could be more than one family, as long as they came together under one roof (Exodus 12:46).
4. They must eat the *Pesach* sacrifice entirely in one night, leaving none for the morning (Exodus 34:25).
5. They must put away all leaven from their tables and from their houses for seven days (Exodus 13:6-7).
6. They must offer the blood of the sacrifice without leaven (Exodus 34:25).
7. They must not break any bones of the *Pesach* Lamb (Exodus 12:46).
8. They must sacrifice the *Pesach* only at the place appointed by G-d (Deut. 16:5-6).
9. All the males of the congregation must appear before the L-rd at the time of *Pesach* (Ex. 23:17, 34:23).

Only those who were part of the newly liberated community could participate in the Passover festival. If Gentile visitors or servants wanted to share in the memorial, they first had to undergo circumcision, which would make them part of the covenant (undergo conversion). The fulfillment of G-d's promise to Abraham, that in his seed (the *Messiah*) all the nations of the earth would be blessed, implies that they who have undergone circumcision of the heart (Jeremiah 31:31-33) are eligible to celebrate this festival because they belong to the *redeemed* community of Messiah. This is why Rabbi *Sha'ul* writing to the Gentiles said: "*You who at one time were all aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, are now by faith in Yeshua, the Lamb of G-d, no more strangers & foreigners but fellow-citizens with the household of G-d.*" (Eph. 2:12,19).

Now there is an even greater redemption to commemorate: forgiveness of sin and new life through *Messiah Yeshua*, G-d's perfect Lamb. And so we agree with Scripture that this is a night much to be observed. According to Samuele Bacchiocchi:

What began as a commemoration of the historic deliverance of G-d's people from Egyptian bondage became a type of the Messianic deliverance of G-d's people from the bondage of sin and even serves today as a prophetic reassurance of the future fulfillment of the Messianic ingathering of all the nations to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb. (Rev. 19:9) {G-d's Festivals in Scripture and History pp. 128}

Thus, let us agree with Rabbi *Sha'ul* in 1 Corinthians 5:7a-8 and let us keep the *Pesach*: "*For even Messiah our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*"

In conclusion, let us now join our brethren, JFJ's *The Liberated Wailing Wall* and sing *Passover Lamb*:

Pharaoh had us all enslaved, lab'ring in his land. The L-rd G-d heard our cry and freed us by His hand. And by the blood of the pure and spotless lamb, we're free, we are all set free.

Passover Lamb's blood upon the door, forming a cross to seal us from death's jaw. And by the blood of the pure and spotless lamb, we're free, we are all set free. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, G-d of Abram, thank you for the Lamb.

G-d gave us Israel, but we turned away. G-d gave Torah to us, but we disobeyed. G-d gave His only Son to come and set us free. We're free, we are all set free.

Yes, we all did turn away and we all were lost. So we took a perfect Lamb and nailed Him to a Cross. And by the blood of the pure and spotless lamb, We're free, we are all set free. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, G-d of Isaac, thank you for the Lamb. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, G-d of Israel, thank you for the Lamb.

ⁱ Based loosely on Parashat Bo, FFOZ, CO 2002