

<b>Tsav</b>	<b>Command</b>	<b>Paying Attention to Details</b>
<b>Torah:</b>	Leviticus 6:8(1)- 8:36	
<b>Haftarah:</b>	Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:23, 24 (9:22, 23)	
<b>Brit Chadashah:</b>	Hebrews 9:11-28	

This is one of the portions which I list as technical and it is second portion to deal with both procedures for sacrifices and the kinds of sacrifices which were being offered. This portion also discusses the reason some of the sacrifices were offered.

As I was preparing this Torah Meditation, I consulted a one volume rabbinic Chumash which gave both an English translation alongside the Hebrew text and three sets of commentary notes. Two in Aramaic and one is English at the bottom of each page. Sometimes I find the commentary useful, but generally it gives additional details which are based in various traditional sources, so mostly they are rarely helpful in understanding the meaning of the text.

The Hebrew of the Chumash is taken from the Masoretic translation, which was made in the fifth century and the Hebrew text has been somewhat altered to diminish passages which clearly apply to our Messiah. Verses from the Tanach (Old Testament) which are quoted in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint Greek translation, which over 700 years older than the Masoretic translation. When we differences, we need to accept the Septuagint. I want to find an English translation of the Septuagint and see how many other verses the Masoretic translation alters.

Most offerings were meat from various kosher animals and sometimes unleavened flour was used to make grain offerings. While the burnt offerings were entirely consumed by the fire, sometimes portions of the meat offerings were eaten by the priests and by the one making the offering. With a thanksgiving offering, leavened bread was offered before the L-rd as a wave offering, but was not actually put on the altar.

If an offering was eaten, it had to be entirely eaten so that the meat did not go bad. If any portion was not fully eaten, it was burned like a burnt offering. After some fairly specific instructions about the offerings, the portion moves on to discuss the consecration of Aaron and his sons. Consecration offerings are discussed and as part of the process, the blood from these offerings was placed on the priest's ear, his thumb and his big toe. This probably was an indication that he would always listen to the L-rd and serve the L-rd with whatever he did. He would also walk with the L-rd, wherever he went.

Since the destruction of the second temple, orthodox Jews repeat the words of the rituals and consider that this recitation is equivalent to actually performing the rituals. As part of their daily and festival prayers, they repeat all the instructions as prayers, even though they received no mandate from G-d to do so. While it can be quite instructive to read through these passages and imagine what it was like to actually perform them, either in the temple or in the tent of meeting, we should never consider our reading some kind of equivalent to actually performing them.

The blood sacrifices are all fulfilled in our Messiah and our memory of them should be an expression of gratitude for all that He accomplished for us on the cross.

The instructions were given in great detail, so there would be less chance for any confusion, but how they were actually performed required some creative adaptations to what is written in the biblical text. Sometimes, Talmudic commentaries on certain passages can help to reconstruct how the rituals were performed and also what the sacred items and clothing looked like. But the Talmudic commentaries are not helpful when they add details which are not supported by the written texts of the Bible.

Over the centuries, details were added in the Talmud and came to be considered as having as much authority as the Bible. No human commentary should ever be elevated to the same level as the Scriptures. Let me give you two examples, one good and another unfortunate.

Among Talmudic Jews, they are instructed to think of themselves as a human temple and when they repent, it is said that it is the same as if they had rebuilt the temple and were performing all the ceremonies. Instead of an altar, Talmudic Jews are told to consider their tables to be an altar and they eat kosher food as if they were offering all of it to G-d.

This is not too far from what the New Testament teaches when it says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that we should not eat that which was offered to demons. We are not offering sacrifices on our tables though, because all the temple sacrifices have been fulfilled in our beloved Messiah. Along with Talmudic Jews, we need to consider ourselves as a temple dedicated to G-d, as we are set apart from sin and practice holiness. Only our holiness is derived from the Bible and not from the traditions of men.

The unfortunate example from the Talmud says that when Jerusalem was besieged, Jews bought lambs from their enemies at a highly elevated price in order to use them in the temple rituals. There is no historical evidence for this claim and we would need to ask ourselves why those besieging Jerusalem would be willing to sell lambs to the Jews. This is just a story added to many others in the Talmud which has no basis either in fact or in history.

We are not told what the besieged Jews did when they ran out of sacrificial animals as they fought so hard against their enemies who had them totally surrounded. When their 20 year grain supply was accidentally burned, they began to run out of food and their enemies would not have given them lambs which they would have eaten as part of the sacrificial offerings.

This portion outlines a detailed, harmonious worship of G-d where a celebration meal was often eaten as part of what it meant to serve G-d. Our worship needs to be as harmonious and as majestic because our G-d is more than worthy of our best effort.

We also need to have a balance between being spontaneous and creative and avoiding offering G-d haphazard, disorganized worship which does not exalt Him or His name. One final thing I noticed as I read through the Torah portion. Nearly every offering was presented with an atonement offering, so that their sinfulness was covered and they could be spiritually cleansed on a regular basis.

Keeping short accounts with G-d and seeking for both His forgiveness and His cleansing is a wise spiritual habit to exercise as part of both our worship and our daily walk with the Saviour. The passage may be hard to understand but the concept of holiness and spiritual cleaning is something we need to integrate into our lives in all that we do.

## **Erev Pesach: Dealing with the Controversial Chronology**

As we come to Passover, we want to be sure that we are following what the Bible teaches and are not allowing traditions and myths to disturb our celebrations. Bunnies aren't kosher!

Passover is really a three in one deal which both lasts a week and which also begins our annual countdown to the Festival of Shavuot (Pentecost). On the evening of the fourteenth of Nissan, we have the Seder. The fifteenth of Nissan is Passover day and is the first day of the week of Unleavened Bread. The sixteenth of Nissan is First Fruits and begins our annual countdown to Shavuot.

Our Messiah used the symbolism of the Passover Seder to speak of His death (and resurrection), so, as Messianic believers, Passover is also a double whammy. Our Seder should never compete with our celebration of the institution of the L-rd's Table, we should just celebrate our Seder and observe the L-rd's Table in its original context. The blood of the Lamb delivered our people from Egyptian slavery and the blood of the Lamb of G-d delivers us from the Egypt of this world. He is the cosmic Passover Lamb.

There is quite a bit of controversy about when the Seder occurred and when the resurrection happened and the main thing is to understand how the Jewish calendar works. Along with this, we have to understand that many different calendars were in use before our modern calendar was developed. So finding exact dates means correlating ancient events according to modern dates and this is not always possible or easy.

The modern Jewish calendar is the same as the ancient Jewish calendar which is based on the cycles of the moon. The only difference is that shortly after the Gentile calendar calculated the birth of Yeshua and created B.C. And A.D., the rabbis got together and used the chronologies to calculate the date of creation. Both calendars have accuracy issues.

The Gentile calendar is off by about four years, so the Messiah was actually born in 4 B.C. The Jewish calendar does not take into account that the chronologies are not always sequential from father to son and their calculation is off by a significant margin.

But even with all of these limitations, it should still be possible to calculate when the Seder occurred in the year when our Messiah celebrated it, just before His arrest and His crucifixion. We will discuss establishing the date of His resurrection a little later on in my message.

However, over and above a discussion of the chronologies and the real date for these amazing events, we have to understand that the actual date is not as important as understanding that the actual event occurred. So getting the right date is not as important as celebrating in the right way and even then, having the right attitude is the most important.

Let us deal first with the dates related to Passover as they are recorded in the Bible. I will be using Leviticus 23:4-16, where the Hebrew dates of the three Festivals related to Passover occur in sequence. Information on the festivals can also be found in Numbers (28, 29) and in Deuteronomy 16. Over the years, the week of unleavened bread has come to be referred to as the week of Passover. As well, even though Unleavened Bread is listed as the first of the Pilgrimage Festivals, The Festival of First Fruits came to be the time when the first set of agricultural tithes were brought first to the tabernacle and then to both temples.

Leviticus 23:5 mentions the Passover Seder being held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan between the two evenings. This expression refers to from sunset until full dark. The Seder was to be held after sunset, but before full dark prevented people from seeing where they were going.

When the sun was fully set it was the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nissan, which was both the first day of Passover and the beginning of the seven day festival of Unleavened Bread. It was considered to be a week day Sabbath on which no servile work was to be performed. The Festival of First Fruits, which begins the annual countdown to Pentecost, occurs on the day after the weekday Sabbath.

Some feel that the countdown to Shavuot should only begin after the first regular, seventh day Sabbath after the beginning of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This is not what the Bible teaches. A holy gathering on which you do no servile work refers to a weekday Sabbath. At some time in Jewish history before the temple was destroyed for a second time, First Fruits came to be considered the week day Sabbath in place of the first day of Unleavened Bread.

The 21<sup>st</sup> day of Nissan brings the Week of Unleavened Bread to a close and it was also to be considered a Weekday Sabbath. This year, the 21<sup>st</sup> of Nissan occurs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, which is a regular seventh day Sabbath. It is not considered a double Sabbath, but it is a special Sabbath because it is the last day when we eat unleavened bread. This year, it is also Easter Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. Don't get me started about Easter eggs or bonnets.

To make sure that Jews are celebrating the festivals on the right day, rabbinic Jews observe them over two days. We do not follow this tradition, but on the rabbinic calendar, this year, the second day of the end of the week of Unleavened Bread falls on Easter Sunday. It is traditional to hold the first memorial Yizkor of the new Festival cycle on the second day of the end of Unleavened Bread. So this year, Easter Sunday is also an important day on the Jewish calendar!

You see the first day of Nissan is the New Year in the L-rd and for the King and Passover is the first festival observance of the new year in the L-rd. I went on line to verify some of the details of my message and was surprised that some Messianic believers move the observance of First Fruits and the beginning of the countdown to Shavuot to the day after the first regular seventh day Sabbath after the beginning of Unleavened Bread.

In Leviticus 23, the weekly Sabbath is described as a day where you have a holy gathering and do no servile work. The fifteenth of Nissan, or the first day of Unleavened Bread, is also described as a day when you also have a holy gathering and do no servile work. This makes it a Sabbath, no matter what day it fall on.

As well, in Leviticus 23:2 the festivals of the L-rd are described as days when you have a holy gathering and we are correct in referring to these special days as week day Sabbaths because they are days for holy gatherings and on the days for holy gatherings, you do no servile work. According to the Bible, they are special, weekday Sabbaths

So the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan is a weekday sabbath and the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan is the day after the Sabbath when the countdown to Pentecost beings. In Leviticus, these special days are described as solemn gatherings, which is what the sabbath has always been. You do not have to wait for the first day after the seventh day Sabbath after the beginning of Unleavened Bread, to begin the countdown to Pentecost.

If you do wait for the first day after the seventh day Sabbath after the first Day of Unleavened Bread, you end up with a different date for the festival of Shavuot than the one which the Bible mandates. It can be confusing unless you carefully examine both the meaning of Hebrew words and the contexts of the verses in Leviticus 23 where the festivals are listed.

In the Bible, we are instructed to count seven Sabbaths from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan until the Festival of Shavuot, or fifty days, which would take us to the day after the seventh regular Sabbath, which is always sundown of the fifth of Sivan, which is the beginning of the sixth of Sivan, the real date of Shavuot. The date for Shavuot (Pentecost) always occurs on the same day on the Hebrew calendar – the sixth of Sivan – which is always at sunset, the day after the seventh day Sabbath, if you begin the countdown on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan.

Now let us try and reconcile the Hebrew dates for the big three (Passover, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits) with their Gentile equivalents on the Gentile calendar. In the year when our Messiah was crucified, died and rose from the dead, the Passover Seder was celebrated on a Tuesday evening. His arrest, his trial and His crucifixion and burial all occurred on a Wednesday before sunset.

The earliest church records refer to a Good Wednesday and not to a Good Friday. The Jewish leaders did not want our Messiah to hang on the cross over their celebration of First Fruits, because His popularity might have become a distraction for what the biggest temple celebration of the year. They considered the 16 of Nissan to be the weekday Sabbath after Passover and the second day of the week of Unleavened Bread. The day before this, they wanted the Romans to break Messiah's legs, so that it would not take Him a full two days to die and interfere with their massive temple celebrations.

When the Romans went to break His legs, they found Him already dead. When His death occurred, there was darkness over the earth before the actual sunset. They took Him down and hastily buried Him just before sunset on Wednesday. This meant that He spent: all day Thursday, sunset to sunset, all day Friday, sunset to sunset and all day Saturday, sunset to sunset in the grave. It was a full three days and three nights (see Matthew 12:40).

Saturday sunset (full dark) is considered to be the beginning of Sunday, so he arose sometime after the end of the seventh day Sabbath. The ladies went to His tomb at sunrise on the 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, and found the door of the grave opened and the tomb empty. It just happened to be a Sunday, but just as the day for Passover varies from year to year on the secular calendar, so does the day for His resurrection.

There is a particular Hebrew expression of the time which says after three days. Many believers believe that He arose on the third day, which would have made it Saturday in the year when He was crucified, died and arose. But when He met with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they told Him it was the third day since all of this had happened. It was the day after the third day scenario, or the Resurrection would have occurred on Saturday, the seventh day of the week and not on Sunday, which is the first day of the week.

Once Jews were effectively excluded from the early church, the gentile church knew that His crucifixion, death and burial occurred on the day before the Sabbath, but they assumed it was before the seventh day Sabbath and changed Good Wednesday to Good Friday and in order to come up with three days between His death and resurrection they said that Jews consider a part of a day as a full day. This is not accurate. A part of a day is never considered a full day. Jews know how to tell time.

So they said a part of Friday was considered a full day. They had no problems with a full Saturday and a part of Sunday (before dawn) gave them their third day. They continued to claim that He arose at dawn on Sunday, but this way of calculating does not take a Jewish understanding of time into consideration. The Bible teaches that He spent three full days and three full nights in the grave and, since a Jewish day begins at sunset (full dark), once the sun set and it was full dark on Saturday, for Jews, that is when Sunday began, even though to a Gregorian concept of time, it was still Saturday and not the beginning of Sunday.

In Judaism, a day begins and ends at Sunset (full dark) and not at midnight as it does in our modern understanding of time. So here it is. On the day when Yeshua celebrated His last Seder, it was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, or a Tuesday evening. His arrest, trial, and crucifixion occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, which that year was a Wednesday. He spent a full three days in the tomb (Thursday, Friday and Saturday or the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of Nissan)) and rose sometime after sunset on Saturday (full dark), which is the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan.

This five day scenario does not vary on the Jewish calendar and His resurrection only occurs on a Sunday when this day corresponds to the 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. When the 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan falls on other days, which ever day it falls on, should be celebrated as Resurrection day. After three days is when this incredible event occurred, whether or not this day corresponds with a Sunday. Sunday is never the Day of the L-rd and is rarely the day when the resurrection occurred. The 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan is the day we should be celebrating, no matter on which weekday it falls. This year, in 2021, it falls on Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup> – no fooling.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan falls on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup> this year (2021) and He was arrested, tried and died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, which is Sunday, March the 28<sup>th</sup> this year. He spent the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> in the grave – which this year corresponds to the 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of March (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday). The glorious day of his resurrection always occurs on the 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, which this year is the Thursday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of April.

What did He do for three full days and three full nights in the grave? He ministered to the souls of the dead. Read about His ministry to the souls of the dead in I Peter 3:18- 4:6. What happened at His resurrection? Read Matt. 27:51-53 carefully. There was only one earthquake and it occurred at His resurrection and the veil was also torn when this shaking of the ground occurred. Many teach that when He died, an earthquake occurred and the veil was torn. This is not what the Bible teaches. The earthquake did not cause the stone to roll away, an angel or two did that. Where are the blessed dead now, as they await their resurrection? See Revelation 6:9-13. How well do you know what the Bible teaches?

The wonderful true story of our Messiah's death, burial and resurrection is linked to the celebration of Passover and to the Festival of Unleavened Bread. His resurrection occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, which was after the three days He spent in the tomb.

So do we engage with our gentile friends and try and correct the false sequence of events they have developed? They are celebrating the same miraculous series of events, even though they have greatly diminished the central place which the Bible gives to the Seder. They have the right idea, but with patience and respect, we may get a few of them to listen and return the celebration of our Messiah's trail, death, burial and resurrection to its rightful place in the Season of Passover. No bunnies or Easter Eggs for this cowboy, not even if they are chocolate. Well, maybe a chocolate egg or a chocolate lamb. Let us strive to do the right thing, the right way on the right day. Shavua Tov and Shabbat shalom.