

The Night to Be Much Observed: What is its True Meaning?

The Night to Be Much Observed is an annual observance by the churches of God.¹ It is celebrated on the night of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the first of God's seven annual holy days. The tradition is to gather together in one another's homes or as a group in some facility to enjoy a meal and fellowship. This meal is to celebrate Israel journeying from Rameses to Succoth, about twenty-four hours after they had observed Passover. They stopped there to have a meal late on the night of the fifteenth of Abib.

This is based on Exodus 12:42. "It *is* a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this *is* that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations" (KJV). This is indeed a night that God commands us to observe, but is having a meal, to celebrate Israel having a meal, what God is commanding us to do?

What is the great spiritual significance of this meal that is on a holy day, while the Passover meal, that was on the night they were released from Egypt (sin), doesn't even warrant being on a holy day? After all, without Passover, Israel could not have traveled to Succoth to have such a meal in the first place. Why did it take Israel twenty-four hours or so after Passover to begin leaving Egypt (sin)? This twenty-four hour gap from Passover to the beginning of the exodus does not seem to fit the scriptures.

This is backed up by Exodus 11:1, when before Passover, "...the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let *you* go, he shall surely thrust you out [1644, *to drive out, cast out*] hence altogether [3617, *completely*]."

To be thrust out does not sound like the people were going to be able to loiter around in Egypt for twenty-four hours before leaving, even if they had wanted to. As we shall see, they were thrust out just as the Eternal said they would be.

This was followed up with further instructions from the Eternal, given prior to Passover. "**Speak now in the ears of the people**, and let every man borrow [7592, *ask, inquire*] of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. **And the LORD gave the people favor** [2580, *favor, goodwill*] **in the sight of the Egyptians**. Moreover the man Moses *was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (Exodus 11:2, 3).

¹ This is referencing the churches of God that are descended from the now defunct Worldwide Church of God.

The borrowing from the Egyptians took place prior to Passover, and the Egyptians had goodwill towards the people at that time. However, as we shall see, that goodwill changed after the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, on the night of the Passover ceremony.

Moses told Pharaoh of the plague that was going to strike the firstborn in the land of Egypt (vv. 4-7). “And all thy servants shall come down to me, and bow down themselves to me, saying, **Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out.** And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger” (v. 8). Moses’ statement indicates that they were going to begin leaving as soon as Pharaoh told them to get out.

The plague was going to strike Egypt during the night of Passover. Exactly when did Israel begin their journey from the land of Egypt? Was it twenty-four hours later? To find the answer we need to look at the order of events.

The people were to kill the Passover on the fourteenth day of Abib, “between the evenings” (Exodus 12:6). There are two primary interpretations of “between the evenings.” One is twilight at the beginning of the fourteenth, and the other is the midpoint between noon and sunset on the afternoon of the fourteenth.² By following the events of Passover, the correct meaning of “between the evenings” will become obvious.

After killing the sacrifices they were to put its blood around the entrances of their dwellings (v. 7). The blood of the sacrifice was crucial to the salvation of the people. The Eternal said, “...**when I see the blood, I will pass over you**, and the plague shall not be upon you **to destroy you**, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:13). Without the shedding of blood there cannot be a Passover ceremony, for “...without shedding of blood is no remission [859, *deliverance from captivity, forgiveness, pardon*]” (Heb. 9:22).

The preparation of the Passover offering, which included roasting it whole, would have taken five to six hours. They were to “...eat the flesh **in that night**, roast with fire, and **unleavened bread**; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (v. 8).

The Passover ceremony is the only observance that is specifically commanded to be held at night. Why at night? Because darkness symbolizes sin, and Passover is about coming out of darkness (sin). Going from darkness to light is the most basic pattern in the Bible.

Unleavened bread is commanded to be eaten for exactly seven days, beginning with the fifteenth of Abib (Lev. 23:6-8; Num. 28:17-25; Deut. 16:2-4; Ex. 12:15-20). When God commands us to do something, it is for a reason. God uses numbers in scripture because they have meaning that we are to pay attention to. Leaven symbolizes sin, and the number seven means something is

² The 9th hour, the midpoint between noon and sunset, or about 3:00 P.M., is when “Christ our Passover” died (Matt. 27:45-50; Mk. 15:33-41; Lk 23:44-49).

complete, finished, or sanctified. The seven days of unleavened bread picture the complete removal of sin, which is sanctification. If you add even a part of a day to those seven days you are changing their meaning. “You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it, that you may keep [8104, *hedge about, guard, protect, attend to*] the commandments of the LORD your God...” (Deut. 4:2).

On the night of the Passover ceremony, “...it came to pass, that **at midnight** the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...And Pharaoh rose up **in the night**, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron **by night**, and said, **Rise up, and get you forth from among my people**, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also” (vv. 29-32).

At this point the children of Israel were released from the bondage of Egypt (sin) on the very night that they had eaten the Passover. What released them from the bondage of sin? The death of the firstborn of the Egyptians represents the death of our old man of sin. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:6, 7).

What did the Egyptians do in response to the deaths of their firstborn? “And the Egyptians were urgent [2388, *to press upon, be urgent, seize*] upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste [4116, *quickly, speedily, hasty*]; for they said, We *be* all dead *men*” (Ex. 12:33).

In accordance with what the Eternal had said to Moses, the Egyptians were attempting to get Israel out of their land as quickly as possible. How did the people of Israel respond to this? Did they delay, and just decide to hang around in sin for a while? No. “And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders” (v. 34). The Israelites reacted by grabbing their belongings to begin their journey.

Verses 35 and 36 cover the borrowing that they had already done before Passover, at a time when they had favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. They certainly did not have favor after Passover. If people are trying to throw you out of their house, would you think it was because they looked upon you with favor? I don’t think so, and that probably would not be the best time to ask them for anything.

They are beginning their journey on the same day that they had eaten the Passover. “And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, *even* very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; **because they were thrust out** [1644, *cast out, to*

drive out] of Egypt, and **could not tarry** [4102, *linger, delay, hesitate*], **neither had they prepared for themselves any victual**” (vv.37-39).

The children of Israel did not have time to dilly dally around in Egypt (sin) because they were thrust out, just as God said they would be. They left in such a hurry that they did not have time to prepare any food before leaving. Had they hung around all day on the fourteenth until the following night, then surely they could have found some time to prepare food to take with them on their journey.

“At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations” (vv. 41, 42, ESV).

On what night did the Eternal watch over Israel to bring them out of the land of Egypt? “And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and **ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover**. For I will pass through the land of Egypt **this night**, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD. And the **blood** [*of the Passover sacrifice*] shall be to you for a token [226, *sign*] upon the houses where ye *are*: and **when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt**” (vv. 11-13).

On the night of Passover the Eternal watched for the blood that was there to protect the people from death. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift [5486, *gift of grace*] of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

“And this day”—still the same day of Passover—“shall be unto you for a memorial; and **ye shall keep it a feast** to the LORD throughout your generations; **ye shall keep it a feast** by an ordinance forever. **Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread**...And in the first day *there shall be* a **holy convocation**...And ye shall observe *the feast of* unleavened bread; **for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt**: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever” (Exodus 12:14-17).

Verses 43-49 cover the ordinance of the Passover, and the children of Israel obeyed the law of the Passover (v.50). “And it came to pass the **selfsame day**, *that* the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt **by their armies**[6635, *organized, military formation*]” (v. 51).

On the selfsame day that the people had observed the Passover the people were leaving Egypt, just as the Eternal had said they would (v. 17). And this day is a day of unleavened bread.

“And Moses said unto the people, **Remember** [2142, *commemorate*] **this day**, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; **for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place**: there shall **no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib**” (Exodus 13:3, 4).

What was the strength of hand? “...By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...” (Ex. 13:14, 15). Again, it was on the night of the Passover ceremony that they were released from the bondage of Egypt (sin).

That day was the fifteenth of Abib. “And they departed from Rameses in the first month, **on the fifteenth day of the first month**; on the morrow [4283, *morning*]³ after the Passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand **in the sight of all the Egyptians**. For the Egyptians buried all *their* firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments” (Numbers 33:3, 4).

The people were leaving in plain view of the Egyptians, who would not have been burying their firstborn at night. It was sometime after midnight when Pharaoh said, “Rise up, and get you forth from among my people” (Ex. 12:31). Pharaoh’s pronouncement was on Passover night, and that is when they were released from the bondage of Egypt (sin).

By the time the people of Israel had burned the inedible parts of the sacrifice in the morning (Exodus 12:10), and had begun leaving with their flocks and herds, it was daylight. This follows the Biblical pattern of going from darkness to light. “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of **Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**” (1 Peter 2:9).

For, “...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and **walk in darkness**, we lie, and do not the truth: But **if we walk in the light**, as He is in the **light**, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7).

The Passover ceremony on the night of the fifteenth of Abib is The Night to be Much Observed! “It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations” (Ex. 12:42, ESV).

³ *Strong’s* #4283 can mean morning. “And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; *and* if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up **early on the morrow** [4283], and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water” (Judges 6:36-38). Early on the morrow is the morning after the previous night on the same day.

The Passover ceremony, contrary to the teachings of the churches of God, **is a holy convocation**, and it is to be held on the first day of unleavened bread. There are seven annual holy convocations, and seven is complete, finished. There is no commanded assembly on the fourteenth of Abib. It is the day on which the Passover was sacrificed “between the evenings,” at the same time that Christ died at the 9th hour, about 3:00 P.M. (Mt. 27:45-50; Mk. 15:33-41; Lk. 23:44-49).

It is God who determined when “Christ our Passover” would die, which was the exact midpoint between solar noon and sunset, i.e. “between the two evenings.” If we were still required to perform the sacrifice it wouldn’t be difficult to figure out that the sacrifice must precede the Passover ceremony.

The fourteenth is the most important day in God’s plan because that is when Jesus laid the foundation upon which we are to build. “For other foundation **can no man lay** than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Notice, no man can lay that foundation except Jesus Christ. That foundation was laid **one time only, about two thousand years ago on the afternoon of the fourteenth!**

There isn’t a **commanded assembly on the fourteenth** because the work that was done on it was a perfect work completed by Jesus Christ. There is nothing that can be added to it, nor is there anything that can be taken from it.

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion **a chief corner stone, elect, precious**: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *He is precious*: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And **a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence** [4625, *generally a snare, a stumbling block*], **even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient**: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:6-8).

We are to build **on THAT foundation!** We cannot build on our own foundation. The Worldwide Church of God taught that the Passover ceremony must precede the laying of the foundation by Jesus Christ, and that the Night to be Much Observed was twenty-four hours after the Passover ceremony. They were building on their own foundation, and the foundation that Jesus laid became “a stone of stumbling” to them.

Where is the Worldwide Church of God today? It has been completely obliterated because it was built on the foundation of a man. “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:27).

Let us build on the foundation that Jesus laid by observing Passover on the Night to be Much Observed, the fifteenth of Abib.