

THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION

PESACH ~ 5784 / פסח

☆ *Passover* †

In this week’s guide...

COMMENTARY

The account of the Exodus from Egypt is Israel’s defining narrative. This dramatic liberation would not have happened apart from the events of the inaugural Passover. But what is a compelling saga for the Jewish people is of vital importance for the entire world because it connects to another moment...*1500 years later*..... 1

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

That first Passover has captivated the imaginations of millions throughout the years—the agony of Egypt’s cries, the dread of the “death angel” arrival, the unparalleled relief of deliverance after centuries of oppression. But what about the *second* observance of Passover...in the wilderness? Much of the spiritual life is spent in between coming out of our bondage and entering the fullness of God’s promises—how will we handle that challenge?..... 2

HEBREW WORD STUDY

Did you ever wonder why the Lord commanded Israel to observe the Passover annually? The historic event is a complicated mix of light and darkness, liberation (for Israel) and loss (for Egyptian families). There is a Hebrew word in Exodus 13 that provides a bit of understanding to this divine directive..... 3

OVERVIEW

One of the most widely observed Jewish holidays, Passover (or *Pesach*) holds profound meaning for the followers of *Yeshua*. This week’s reading takes us away from our “regularly-scheduled *parashat*” and transports us to that historic (and sobering) moment when the death angel visited Egypt. The blood of the lamb made all the difference that night...

and it still does today!

FUSION GLOBAL WITH RABBI JASON
Weekly Torah Portion – *Pesach 5784*

COMMENTARY

Staff Contributor

This week, we celebrate *Pesach* (Passover), a feast in which we commemorate the freedom God brought to the Children of Israel who suffered as slaves in Egypt for centuries. This liberation is one of the most awesome and powerful examples of God’s grace, power, and might. Every aspect of the Exodus narrative is a glorious example of the work of salvation, redemption, and deliverance made available by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

One of the most profound aspects of the Passover commemoration is its prophetic foreshadowing of the Blood of the Lamb. In the original Passover, the blood of a pure and unblemished lamb was applied to the doorposts of the Israelites’ homes. This act of obedience brought about divine protection, sparing them from the impending death that was about to sweep over Egypt. It was a final, decisive blow against the ‘gods’ of Egypt, leading to the ultimate liberation of our people from the shackles of slavery.



This powerful and compelling symbol of God’s love for His people, as awe-inspiring as it was, pointed to something even more extraordinary. It was a foreshadowing of the fulfillment of Abraham’s prophecy in Genesis 22:8, “[God will provide for Himself a lamb...](#)” And indeed, He did. He provided Himself, clothed in human form, as an atonement offering for our sins. As the Apostle Paul wrote of *Yeshua* in Colossians 1:15, “[He is the image of the invisible God.](#)” More directly, our heavenly Father provided the blood as an atonement for our sins.

What’s utterly stunning about all of this is that, just like those lambs on that fateful Passover in Egypt, our Messiah was also slaughtered on Passover. His blood served as the “true and better” Passover sacrifice, one that brings salvation, freedom, and deliverance from our slavery to sin. I love the beauty of Passover, and I am even more amazed by the fact that God orchestrated something so long ago to point to the very salvation He would provide almost 1500 years later through His one and only Son, *Yeshua HaMashiach*.

✧ Passover ✧

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

Staff Contributor

During the week of Passover, we move away from our regularly-scheduled Torah portion readings, and instead, we journey through various passages which highlight relevant themes. One of these “holiday readings” is found in Numbers 9, which details Israel’s first Passover outside Egypt. It’s worth noting that there is a striking parallel between the first two Passovers’ movements. The first Passover was integral to the nation’s move out of Egypt, and this second one preceded their movement onward from Sinai.

Egypt was a complicated experience for Jacob’s children. On the one hand, Egypt was a place of rescue and preservation for those twelve sons. Joseph declared, [“God sent me ahead of you to ensure a remnant in the land and to keep you alive for a great escape”](#) (Genesis 45:7). But on the other hand, Egypt was (even more so) a place of oppression and darkness, as Jacob’s descendants endured hardship there for generations. The Passover Seder focuses on the retelling of God’s rescue of those enslaved people through the Ten Plagues and the parting of the Red Sea (or “Sea of Reeds”).

That second Passover experience must have been an emotional one. The memories of that original exodus were still fresh in their minds. Participation in Passover has kept those memories alive in the Jewish people throughout their history. But the plain fact is, we can’t live in the past. In Numbers 9, Israel was no longer in Egypt, but neither were they in the Promised Land. The Wilderness was a “liminal” space, an in-between reality better than Egyptian slavery but a far cry from the goodness of God’s promises. Israel’s deliverance was not complete on the shore of the Red Sea—it had just begun! Have you ever tracked a package you ordered online? You might see updates like “left the warehouse” or “out for delivery.” As encouraging as those notices might be, nobody considers a package delivered until it’s sitting on their front porch. Similarly, Israel’s deliverance wasn’t complete until they were in Canaan.

God’s original instructions regarding the Passover ritual included this detail: [“This day shall be a day of remembrance for you”](#) (Exodus 12:14 NRSV). God did not give this command (of annual celebration) because He needed anything, but because He knew Israel would need something: hope. **Remembrance is critical in liminal spaces.** As we remind ourselves of God’s mighty and salvific acts in our past, we can dare to hope that we’ll see them again in our future. If the present-day *Seder* celebration can serve as a reactivation of that original Passover, our participation in it can ignite the flame of divine possibility within us.



✧ *Passover* †

This divine possibility and reactivation reached their fulfillment in the *Seder* that *Yeshua* celebrated just before His death. The Lord didn't abolish His Jewish roots—He filled-them-full (or “fulfilled them”). He brought clarity and depth, the actual substance to the “shadows” of Passover. The enslavement of Egypt was a physical, historical reality that was also pointing to an existential reality: humanity's enslavement to sin (see Romans 6:17-18). The miraculous march through the Red Sea brought Israel an entirely new lease on life, much like our movement through the waters of baptism enables us to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

But the plain fact is, many of us have found that walking in this new life involves some “wilderness wandering.” We're saved, but we're also awaiting salvation (*cf.* Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:9). We live in this world as exiles and pilgrims. We pray as *Yeshua* taught us, “Thy Kingdom come.” Walking out this “newness of life” includes many challenges. We—like those Israelites in the wilderness—need hope to thrive in such liminal spaces. We need to regularly remember all the ways God has acted in our lives so we can dare to hope that He will keep showing up in miraculous ways.

And this is why the original Passover event and *Yeshua*'s “Last Supper” echo each other. Moses' call for a “day of remembrance” was transposed by the Prophet who is greater-than-Moses: “**Do this in remembrance of me**” (Luke 22:19 NRSV *emphasis added*). So, you can dare to hope that the One who delivered you from your past will also bring you into His future!



✧ Passover †

HEBREW WORD STUDY: *Ot* (“sign”) / אות

Staff Contributor

Exodus 13 begins with further instructions regarding the Passover we read about in the previous chapter. The tone of this particular passage is future-oriented:



You are to tell your son on that day saying, “It is because of what *ADONAI* did for me when I came out of Egypt. So it will be like a **sign** on your hand and a reminder between your eyes, so that the Torah of *ADONAI* may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand *ADONAI* has brought you out of Egypt.” You are to keep this ordinance as a *moed* from year to year.

–Exodus 13:8-10 (*emphasis added*)

The English word “sign” is a translation of the Hebrew *Ot* (אות / pronounced a bit like “oat”). It appears nearly 80 times in Scripture and has a broad range of meanings. Its tri-consonantal root is:

- *Aleph* (1) / א
- *Vav* (6) / ו
- *Tav* (400) / ת

One way to get a good sense of a word’s meaning is to survey its usage in various contexts. Let’s take a look at *Ot* in the Hebrew Bible...

Let each man encamp under his own standard among the **banners** (*Ve’otot*) of their ancestral house at an appropriate distance around the Tent of Meeting. –Numbers 2:2

My rainbow do I place in the cloud, and it will be a **sign** (*Le’ot*) of the covenant... –Genesis 9:13

But *ADONAI* said to him, “In that case, anyone who kills Cain is to be avenged seven times over.” So *ADONAI* put a **mark** (*Ot*) on Cain, so that anyone who found him would not strike him down. –Genesis 4:15

Yet I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My **signs** (*Ototai*) and wonders in the land of Egypt. –Exodus 7:3

In these instances, we see that the biblical writers used *Ot* to describe everything from literal signs (i.e., banners) to physical phenomena that serve as signs (i.e., the rainbow or Cain’s mysterious “mark”) to God’s activity (Ten Plagues). Now consider the verse in Exodus 13, “it will be like a **sign** (*Le’ot*) on your hand.” Assuming that “it” refers to the practice faithfully observing Passover in future generations, what connection might there be to Noah’s rainbow in Genesis 9 serving as a *Le’ot*? We should also note the scholarly speculation surrounding ties between this verse and *tefillin*.¹



✡ Passover ✡

As one biblical commentary notes,

The reference in verse 9 (and again in 13:16) to “a mark branded on your hand or your forehead,” when taken in conjunction with the command in Deuteronomy 6:8 (also Deut 11:18), gave rise in intertestamental Judaism to the practice of phylacteries (small boxes holding a portion of Scripture tied on the backs of the hands and foreheads)... While the command in Deuteronomy can be interpreted as having a literal intent, the statements here are much more difficult to take in that way. Surely the point is that both our thinking (forehead) and our actions (hands) ought to be continually shaped by the realization that we are people whom God has redeemed to himself (*cf.* Isa 44:1–5).ⁱⁱ

Perhaps this is a great spot to conclude. How will your participation in Passover “mark” your thinking and your actions? More specifically, what obvious “signs” of God’s grace will people be able to observe in your life as you observe this “appointed time”?

All biblical passages referenced are in the Tree of Life Version unless otherwise noted.

Rabbi Jason & Fusion Global present **HEBREW WORD STUDY**

אות

אות / ot: N. **sign.** *An object or event that makes people aware of something.*

A sign (*Ot*) is a concrete object or event that signifies something else. The word can be used for human signs, such as a military banner (Num 2:2) or a sign of good faith between humans (Josh 2:12). It can also be used of things that humans are to do to remind themselves of God, his works, and his relationship with them (e.g., Ex 31:13). Most often, however, *Ot* is used of wonderful acts of God that show his power, character, and faithfulness (e.g., 2 Kgs 20:8–9). About a third of the times that it occurs... *Ot* refers to the signs God performed in Egypt during the time of the exodus (e.g., Ex 7:3; Josh 2:17). These references often function pedagogically as a means of instructing Israel to remember what God has done for them and to trust in him accordingly. In addition, this term is sometimes used of amazing deeds of false prophets and magicians (Dt 13:2).

taken from the *Lexham Theological Wordbook*

THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- Hopefully we never tire of the theologically deep (yet deeply personal) connection between the original Passover lambs and *Yeshua*—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (and you!). How are you affected by the idea that God’s activity that night in Egypt had a direct, intentional connection to the events of Good Friday some 1500 years later? What might this mean for your life?
- Have you ever taken time to reflect on the second Passover that the Children of Israel celebrated? Consider the memories—the cries of that dark night in Egypt, the joy of walking out with the Egyptians wealth draped over them, the saga at the Red Sea...and yet, they were wandering (still). Have you ever found yourself in the “in between” like that? What did you learn?

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS // *Parashat Achrei Mot* – פְּרַשְׁת אַחֲרֵי מוֹת

TORAH

Sunday / Leviticus 16:1-17

Monday / Leviticus 16:18-24

Tuesday / Leviticus 16:25-34

Wednesday / Leviticus 17:1-7

Thursday / Leviticus 17:8-18:5

Friday / Leviticus 18:6-21

Saturday / Leviticus 18:22-30

HAFTARAH

Ezekiel 22:1-19

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 15:10-20

ⁱ Or phylacteries—small black leather boxes with leather straps containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah.

ⁱⁱ Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus*, vol. 1 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 381–382.