

# בשורה *Besorah!*

## *A Tale of Two Passovers... or maybe, one?*

This year, the first night of Passover falls on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March. We cannot fully grasp the significance of Passover without understanding its little-known but basic principle: that Passover is a national peace offering. There are several different kinds of peace offerings in Scripture – brought for a variety of reasons - but here are two main elements: It could only be offered after sin was atoned for and it was the one offering that the forgiven sinner could eat from, as well as share with family and friends. In short, it was a public testimony (visible by the eating) that the person who brought it was right with God and right with his community. Knowing that our present-day observance of the Lord's Table is derived directly from what happened on the night that Jesus was betrayed (a Passover Seder), Paul's words make more sense when he wrote, 'Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?' (1 Co 10:18) and, 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew (proclaim, as in 'haggadah') the Lord's death till he come.' (1 Co 11:26) Serious consequences result when the inner reality does not match the outer activity! (vv. 27- 30)

Psalm 114 is recited at Passover, commemorating the departure of Israel from Egypt. We often limit our conception of

Passover to Moses' administration. But here, the psalmist welds together two seemingly separate events under the one heading of Exodus: namely, crossing the Red Sea *and* crossing the Jordan. This psalm is not only historic but prophetic and it behoves us to turn aside to see what it reveals of God's nature and plan for the last days.

First, we learn that when Israel departed Egypt, Judah was God's sanctuary and Israel His dominion. This reveals God's eternal, two-fold nature as Priest (sanctuary) and King (dominion) - both located and demonstrated in the nation of Israel. But as the Exodus is the sum of its parts, let's look at some aspects of 'Jordan' to understand the lessons.

After Israel crossed the river, led by the priests and the Ark of the Covenant, the entire nation was to be circumcised 'again, the second time' (Josh 5:2). None of the Israelites born in the wilderness had been circumcised, except for Joshua and Caleb; a tiny remnant.

Joshua was instructed to 'make sharp knives'; in Hebrew: knives of flint, or rock (tsurim - צורים). 'Tsur' is translated in various ways, but it is a certain type of rock used to refer to God in scripture. Deuteronomy 32 reveals this particular characteristic of God



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more than any other portion of scripture. It begins, 'Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock...' (v. 3, 4). The song goes on to amplify the Rock's dealings with His people in providing for Jacob (v. 13), in Yeshurun's defection from the 'Rock of his salvation' (Lit. Yeshua, v. 15), the Rock that formed them (v. 18) and the false hope of foreign gods as counterfeit rocks (v. 31, 37).

It is this same Rock that was to be stricken (Ex 17:5, 6) and spoken to (Num 20:8), for living water to gush forth and, as we know, that drink was *spiritual* and the Rock was Messiah (I Cor 10:4)!

It was from *this* material that the Israelites were to make the instruments of the 'second' circumcision. This they did as a nation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan - the same day that Moses commanded to take a lamb per family and examine it for 4 days, in preparation for celebrating the Passover (Ex 12:1-76). Remember, too, that no one could keep the Passover unless they were circumcised (Ex 12:48).

The location of this national circumcision was Gilgal, which means 'rolling' – symbolic of the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt. We know that Golgotha – the place of Yeshua's crucifixion - comes from a Chaldee word (gulgoleth), which, though referring to a 'skull', carries the same meaning of 'rolling'.

The vulnerable nation of Israel then spent the next three days healing from their surgery, in the very presence of their enemies, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, a table was prepared for them when they observed the Passover; a national peace offering.

Already, we see that there is much history and spiritual truth embedded in the few condensed couplets of Ps 114. In vv 5-8, the psalmist asks all four of the geographical obstacles, 'What ailed you?' (literally, 'what was it to you?'), going on to adjure: 'Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which

turned the rock (tsur) into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.' When God told Moses to 'smite the rock' it is the same Hebrew verb that is used in Isaiah 53:4 of the Messiah, who was 'smitten of God'. Psalm 78:35 tells us: 'God was their Rock, and the high God their [Kinsman] Redeemer (Heb: גֹּאֲלָם). Jesus fulfils these types.

This exhortation to tremble is prophetic and the Hebrew word used here is 'chuli' (חָלִי). It is a command to the whole earth to 'convulse-in-the-pain-which-leads-to-birth'. (We discussed the matter of birth pangs in our previous issue of Besorah; available online or by request). In other words, there is coming a time when the entire earth will writhe before the God of Jacob – Who turned the rock into water – unto the salvation/rebirth of Israel as a nation.



It wasn't the psalmist who combined the Red Sea with Jordan but God, when He charged Moses and Joshua (Deut 31:14 – end) and dictated the Song in Deut 32. It is this Song that Paul draws from when expounding the mystery and purpose of the Church being bound up in the destiny of

Israel, in Rom 11:11: 'They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation (Deut 32:21).

Earlier this year, an article appeared in the UK's most prominent Jewish newspaper warning the Jewish community against ministries, such as ours, who bring the Gospel specifically to Jewish people. (Ironically, in a subsequent issue of the same periodical, a leading UK rabbi was calling for synagogues to 'make room for atheists'!) The author's message (which took up a full page and a half and specifically mentioned MT) was two-fold: Beware of Christians who try to 'convert' Jewish people with the Gospel, and 'support

and encourage' those Christians who deliberately do not bring the Gospel (in some cases, signing agreements not to do so) but which, rather, affirm Jewish people in their Judaism. The journalist is well-known, contributes regularly to the paper and is the founder of an organisation called the 'Shalom Initiative' (the dictionary definition of 'initiative' is 'new plan').

True peace, as the peace offering shows, is the result of God's forgiveness for sin; not the result of human effort or endeavour. To remove the atonement is to diminish the fundamental definition of peace, making it no longer peace! The same is true of the Rock. One of the stark lessons of Deut 32 concerns 'false rocks' in which people trust. How could we ever imagine that peace can be achieved or established apart from the Prince of Peace and His finished work? If the church promotes another, humanistic, 'way' of peace - calling it 'comfort' - is it still the church? Isaiah defines comfort: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, **that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.**' (Is 40:1,2; emphasis mine)

Some hymns depict Canaan (crossing the Jordan) as Heaven, but there is no sin in heaven and no war there. One day soon, The Rock (הצור) will circumcise the entire nation of Israel the 'second time' – this time, it will be their hearts - through a time of unparalleled global shaking. The Song of Moses concludes: 'Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto (Lit. Hebrew: 'atone for') His land, and to His people.' (Deut 32:43)

Oh, that the church would tremble before the God of Jacob over this in the meantime!

In His shalom, Chrissy Rodgers

