

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *Passover and the calendar*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of April 11, 2009

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read John chapters 18 & 19.

Commentary: Because most *Philadelphians* read chapters 13 through 17 of John's gospel when the Passover sacraments are taken, reading chapters 18 and 19 need to be addressed before the Wave Sheaf Offering is celebrated tomorrow morning; for rabbinical Judaism holds that the Wave Sheaf should be commemorated on a fixed calendar date, the 16th of Abib, the day following the high Sabbath, rather on the 1st-day of the week, the day following the weekly Sabbath within Unleavened Bread. In the 1st-Century, a schism had developed between Sadducees and Pharisees over when to celebrate the Wave Sheaf Offering, and in how to read Joshua 5:10–12 ...

While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

This passage has caused an enormous amount of controversy; for did Israel eat the Passover on the dark portion of the 14th as Israel in Egypt ate the Passover, or did Israel in the Promised Land eat at the end of the 14th, the dark portion of the 15th?

If Israel ate on the dark portion of the 14th, then the day after the Passover would be the 15th of Abib, the great Sabbath of the Sabbath as John calls the high day (John 19:31). Did Israel eat of the produce of the land without first waving a handful to the Lord as commanded (Lev 23:10–11)? And how could Israel wave a sheaf of new grain on the morrow after the Sabbath unless the Passover was the Sabbath, which suggests that Israel did not eat the Passover on the 14th, but on the 15th, making the day after the Passover the 16th, the justification used by rabbinical Judaism for continuing the Pharisees' practice of setting the Feast of Weeks as a fixed calendar date, counted from a fixed date for the Wave Sheaf Offering.

But, let's not forget that Israel had entered into the Promised Land behind Joshua on the 10th day of Abib, the day when the Passover lamb was selected and penned; Israel was "penned" in the Promised Land as Jesus, the selected Lamb of God, was "penned" in Jerusalem on the 10th day of Abib ... Jesus gives one sign that He was from heaven, that being the sign of Jonah being three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish or whale (Matt 12:39–40). Therefore, assuming that Jesus fulfilled this sign and that He was gone from the grave before daylight on the 1st day of the week (John 20:1), and that He was placed into the grave at the beginning of the high Sabbath, the 15th of Abib, then He would have been in the grave on the 15th, the high Sabbath, the 16th, and the 17th, the weekly Sabbath. He would have been resurrected at the beginning of the 18th, or about twelve hours before Mary found the tomb empty. This would place His crucifixion on the 14th, at about 3:00 pm, a Wednesday, and would have the high Sabbath occur on Thursday. Jesus would have entered Jerusalem five days before the high Sabbath (*cf.* John 12:1, 12; 19:31), or on the weekly Sabbath, the 10th of Abib. Therefore entering into the Promised Land on the 10th of Abib equates to entering into the Sabbath, the connection the writer of Hebrews makes in using Psalms 95:10–11 to bridge from Numbers chapter 14 to endtime disciples failing to enter into God's rest while the promise of entering stands (*cf.* Num chap 14; Heb 3:16–4:11)

Even though the children of Israel entered into God's rest on the day when the Passover lamb was chosen, these children of Israel were a blemished lamb that could not be sacrificed as the paschal Lamb of God (see Ezek 20:18–21), so the sacrifice of the Lamb by which Israel would be redeemed would have to wait until the Logos entered His creation (John 1:3, 14) as His only Son (John 3:16), the man Jesus of Nazareth. But it has been the intention of the Lord from the beginning to give His firstborn son (Ex 4:22) as the redemption price for firstfruits of humanity. The Father gave His firstborn Son to redeem Israel, so that Israel could be without sin and could be an unblemished lamb, an acceptable sacrifice of the first year for the harvest of the firstfruits of this world.

A couple of concepts must now be held in tension: (1) Israel as a lamb of the first year versus Christ Jesus as a lamb of the first year, and (2) entering in the Promised Land equates to entering into the presence of the Lord, or being waved as firstfruits.

The harvest of this earth doesn't, from God's perspective, take many years (six thousand years) but takes one year, with the harvest consisting of firstfruits of Israel (analogous to ancient Judea's barley harvest) and the main crop harvest of Israel (analogous to the wheat harvest) gathered into the house of God. There were two grain harvests forming one harvest of Israel occurring each year, with the linguistic icon "Israel" metonymically representing the great nation promised to the patriarch Abraham (Gen 12:2). Thus, a "year" metonymically represents the entire course of the plan of God, with the resurrection of firstfruits to occur when Jesus returns on the fourth day (of the Genesis "P" creation account), and with the main crop harvest to occur in the great White Throne Judgment (the sixth day). So every Israelite without sin will be as an unblemished lamb of the first year; hence, the Passover lamb is selected from among all of the unblemished lambs of the first year, making time therefore meaningless.

The seven days of Unleavened Bread metaphorically represents the entire period when Israel lives without sin, beginning with the glorified Jesus breathing on ten of His disciples (John 20:22) and continuing until Satan is loosed from

the being bound in the bottomless pit (Rev 20:7). Therefore the first day of Unleavened Bread (the 15th of Abib) will see, according to the instructions Moses gives to the children of Israel on the plains of Moab, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb according to the model (pattern) seen in Joshua chapter 5, where Israel sacrifices the Passover, not as done in Egypt, but at the hour when Israel left Egypt: “you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out from Egypt” (Deut 16:6).

Remember, in Egypt, Israel was not to leave their houses until morning on the night when they ate the Passover (Ex 12:22), and Israel did not live among the Egyptians, nor would anyone expect a slave people to live among the people’s masters. Visualize what is recorded about the plagues: about the fourth plague (flies), the Lord [YHWH] tells Moses, “But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there ... I will put a division between my people and your [Pharaoh’s] people” (Ex 8:22–23). About the fifth plague: “But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die ... the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead” (Ex 9:4, 6–7 — Pharaoh had to go somewhere to look). About the seventh plague (hail): “And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail” (vv. 25–26). About the ninth plague: “Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days ... but all the people of Israel had light where they lived (Ex 10:22–23).

If the land of Goshen was near to the land of Egypt, the light that Israel had in Goshen would have permitted the people of Egypt to see so that they could have risen from their place (Ex 10:23). But the land was not near or very near. Egyptians and Israel were not close neighbors, nor did Israel have fast chariots. Therefore, when it came time for Israel to spoil the Egyptians, taking from the Egyptians gold and silver jewelry and fine clothing, it was not a matter of stepping next door to borrow a cup of sugar. It was a major undertaking of walking miles, with these miles consuming hours. Thus, since Israel was commanded not to leave their houses until morning, and since Goshen was physically separated from Egypt by enough distance that light in Goshen did not shine or was not reflected in Egypt, then is it safe to say that Israel was not, despite hurrying, ready to leave Egypt until the evening of the 14th, going into the 15th. Thus, the celebration of the Passover on the night when Israel left Egypt is not a celebration of the Passover as Israel celebrated the Passover in Egypt. However, taking the Passover sacraments of bread and wine on the night that Jesus was betrayed (the dark portion of the 14th) is a celebration of the Passover as Israel in Egypt celebrated the Passover.

If Joshua upon entering the Promised Land observed the Passover as Moses commanded Israel to observe the Passover according to the terms of the second covenant, should disciples follow this example rather than the example Jesus set and that Paul references (1 Cor 11:23–26)?

Have disciples entered into God’s rest? Are they glorified? Or do disciples continue to dwell in tents of flesh that are subject to indwelling sin and death as Israel in Egypt dwelt in houses in the land of Goshen?

Israel, a nation circumcised of heart (Rom 2:28–9), has not entered into God’s rest, the Promised Land of immortality. The new creature or new self born of spirit [pneuma Theon] is not of this world, but this new creature needs its mortal tent of flesh to put on immortality before it can pass through the fire separating the supra-dimensional heavenly realm from this world. Only then can this new creature truly enter into God’s rest. Thus, Israel under Joshua as a type of Israel under Jesus entered into God’s rest when it crossed the Jordan. The nation was no longer in bondage to Pharaoh, a type of Satan, the present prince of this world. So Israel beyond the Sea of Reeds is analogous to endtime Israel after the second Passover liberation of this nation, and Israel eating the Passover beyond the Jordan is analogous to when Christ Jesus will again eat the Passover with His disciples (Matt 26:29), which is why the manna (representing the breath of Christ being with disciples — Rom 8:9) ceased to come when the people of Israel ate unleavened bread of the Promised Land. Israel will then be younger siblings to Christ Jesus.

Again, Israel did not leave Egypt on the night when the nation ate that first Passover, but left the following night after herds and flocks were gathered and after the Egyptians were spoiled by Israel. Egypt was in no mood to refuse Israel anything, when in every household, the deaths of firstborns were being mourned (Ex 12:30). Therefore, Moses’ instructions that pertain to the second covenant introduced in Deuteronomy 29:1 and by application of Deuteronomy 30:10, includes all of the book of Deuteronomy, are not in effect until after Israel chooses life or death on the plains of Moab (Deut 30:15–20). Joshua (in Gr: Iesous — from Acts 7:45) as a type of Jesus (in Gr: Iesous — from Acts 4:10) leads Israel after the nation chooses life or death, not before. Moses gets Israel to the plains of Moab, when the choice of life or death is set before every Israelite.

Therefore, the Passover being eaten on the night that Israel left Egypt doesn’t take effect until after Israel, sent into captivity in a far land, turns to God and by faith begins to obey the Lord’s voice, keeping all that the Lord has commanded Israel (Deut 30:1–2).

According to the Psalmist, the Promised Land is God’s rest (Ps 95:10–11) ... the nation that left Egypt could not enter into God’s rest because of unbelief (Num 14:11; Heb 3:19); yet Moses entered into God’s rest when he entered into God’s presence. And Sabbatarian disciples in this era are as Israel was in Egypt.

A covenant is made with Israel on the night that Israel left Egypt:

And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute [law or covenant] of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired servant may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.” / All the people of Israel did just as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the Lord brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts. (Ex 12:43–51)

Notice, nothing is said in this covenant about offering the Passover at a place where the Lord chooses, for today disciples are the temple of God (1Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16) and wherever disciples dwell is where the temple is. When there is again an earthly sanctuary and a third temple exists, then disciples will eat the Passover in a common location—and physical circumcision will return. Today there is only a spiritual sanctuary; thus to enter this sanctuary disciples must be circumcised of heart. The flesh doesn't matter. But after Christ's millennial reign begins, there will again be a physical temple which will require that an Israelite be circumcised both in the flesh and of the heart to enter (Ezek 44:7, 9).

Those disciples (as well as rabbinical Judaism) who would today have Israel eat the Passover on the dark portion of the 15th of Abib anticipate the period of time beyond the second Passover liberation of Israel, the shedding of blood that will end the Passover covenant made on the day when the Lord took the fathers of Israel by the hand to lead the nation out of Egypt (Jer 31:31–32; Heb 8:8–9). This first Passover covenant was becoming obsolete and ready to vanish in the 1st-Century, but remains becoming obsolete and ready to vanish today. And what has not yet vanished remains in effect; hence, Christ Jesus gave the example of taking the Passover sacraments on the night that He was betrayed—and Paul, called to know the will of God (Acts 22:14), commands the saints at Corinth a quarter century after Calvary to take the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed.

If the first Passover covenant remains in effect, what about the Wave Sheaf Offering ... if Joshua doesn't command the children of Israel to eat the Passover as Moses commanded Israel in Egypt to eat the Passover, whom is to be believed?

On the same day that the Passover covenant was instituted, the Lord tells Moses,

The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine." / Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year. (Ex 13:1–10)

Two "Unleavens" or periods of when unleavened bread is eaten are now present in Scripture, the first being during the actual eating of the Passover ("You shall not off the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover remain until the morning" — Ex 34:25, also

23:18), and the second being the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that begins the following night. And when a disciple looks at what Matthew actually writes, this is what is seen: “on but the first unleavened” (Matt 26:17). Matthew, a bean-counter (tax collector), separates the first unleavened, or the first time when unleavened bread is commanded to be eaten in the year from the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a subtle distinction missed by translators committed to not keeping the Feast.

When Israel is under the second covenant, or the Moab covenant (which Israel is not yet under), the second Passover will have occurred. The covenant made on the night when Israel left Egypt will have ended, but only ended to be replaced by the New Covenant which will have the Torah written on the hearts and placed in the minds of Israel (Jer 31:33). And how can we say with certainty that second covenant was not implemented prior to Calvary?

The Apostle Paul wrote,

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that *Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law*. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. (Rom 9:30–32 emphasis added)

The law that would have led to righteousness was the Moab covenant, which requires faith for its implementation (Deut 30:1–2). But because Israel pursued this law by the works of its hands, by sacrificing Passover lambs on the 15th of Abib without understanding that the nation remained enslaved to sin and death as their fathers had been enslaved by Pharaoh, that the nation remained in need of liberation, Israel stumbled over obedience to God.

Paul continues,

They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;

and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Brothers [converts at Rome], my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom 9:33–10:4)

The law that is holy (Rom 7:12) doesn't end, but Christ is the conclusion of the Law, all that Israel has expected, the nation's redeemer. He is both the cornerstone of the temple (1 Pet 2:6 – the citation is from Isa 28:16) and the capstone of the temple, for He is the beginning and end of the Torah, the Alpha and Omega (Rev 22:13) of Scripture. He is what man “cannot find out [about] what God has done from the beginning to the end” (Eccl 3:11); for the mind that is set on the flesh, the mind of a person not born of the breath of the Father [pneuma Theon], is hostile to God and cannot submit to the law of God (Rom 8:7). And only by submitting to obedience can a person comprehend the things of God.

Paul writes more about the Moab covenant:

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) or “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim) (Rom 10:5–8).

Paul cites Deuteronomy 30:11–14, thereby setting the stage for who it is that will be saved by professing that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father has raised Jesus from the dead—and the “who” is the Israelite in a far land that returns to the Lord to love the Lord with heart and mind, while keeping all that is written in the book of Deuteronomy. It isn’t the Gentile who continues to live as a Gentile in a far land. It is the person who by faith keeps the commandments, thereby cleansing the heart so that it can be circumcised.

What exactly does Paul write?

[B]ecause, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for
“Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.”

But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,
“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”

Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,
“I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a
disobedient and contrary people.” (Rom 10:9–21)

If there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, *dispensionalists* are liars ... if the Jew who by tradition keeps the commandments makes a journey of faith so that this Jew professes with his (or her) mouth that Jesus is Lord, thereby acknowledging that Jesus is of the house of God, and if this Jew believes in his (or her) heart that the Father raised Jesus from the dead, then this Jew will stand on the same theological footing as the Gentile, believing by faith the Jesus is Lord and that the Father raised Jesus from the dead, who begins to keep the precepts of the Law (Rom 2:26) and thereby has his (or her) uncircumcision counted as circumcision.

It is a long journey of faith for the Jew to acknowledge that both the Father and Jesus are God, but no longer than it is for the believing Gentile to begin keeping the Law and thereby living as a Judean ... the journey doesn't seem that far for those of us who have made the journey, regardless of where we started. It only seems long when an infant son of God looks forward at the journey as if this journey were an obstacle course. It takes courage to begin—and no cowards will be in the kingdom (Rev 21:8). The journey must be undertaken by all those who will be glorified (redeemed).

The harvest of firstfruits (the early barley harvest) began with Christ Jesus, the First of the firstfruits. The harvest could not begin until He appeared before the Father as the reality of the Wave Sheaf Offering—and this is the subject for tomorrow's reading.

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The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

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