

The following suggested or possible grouping of Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and limited commentary are, hopefully, obviously thematically related. And the concept behind this High Sabbath's selection is the nature of the Holy Spirit...it is suggested that fellowships have morning and afternoon services on the High Days; thus, readings for two services are grouped together.

Readings for First High Sabbath Of Unleavened Bread 2006 April 12, 2006

Morning Services

The person conducting services 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 first passage read should be Leviticus chapter 23, verses 1 and 2, then verses 4 through 8, followed by Deuteronomy chapter 16, verses 1 through 8, and 16 and 17, then Exodus chapter 23, verses 14 through 17.

Commentary: The three seasons or times a year when Israel is to appear before the Lord is Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, the three seasons when there is a harvest of the Lord. Christ Jesus as the first of the firstfruits, as the reality of the Wave Sheaf Offering, appeared before God and was accepted during Unleavened Bread. He was without sin, leavening representing sin.

The Philadelphia Church and the Churches of God traditionally take up an offering on the three seasons when all Israel was to appear before God, and not appear empty, but giving as blessed and as able. This offering is primarily the inner self-aware, self-conscience new man or creature, born of Spirit, presenting the body of the old man, or old self before God. Disciples in those fellowships that do not observe the holy days will, in the heavenly realm, appear before God in their prayers on these days. But they appear empty-handed. They appear with nothing, while all who are here today have brought an offering: themselves.

Nevertheless, at this time those who are able are asked to give of their physical blessings, not reluctantly, but cheerfully. The person who gives of necessity might as well keep the offering--no treasure will be laid up in heaven for a reluctant offering, which includes presenting oneself before God.

The person conducting services should, at this time, pass a plate or basket as would be appropriate for the size of the gathering. In larger gatherings, the person conducting the services would appoint others to take up the collection.

During the taking up of the offering, special music can be performed. Then following the offering should be a prayer of thanks, followed by a hymn.

Commentary: Without controversy, the circumcised nation of Israel is commanded by Moses to year-by-year keep the spring feast called Unleavened Bread for seven days. These seven days are not identified as a feast of the Jews, as is too often taught within the greater Christian Church, but as a feast of the Lord [YHWH]. These seven days follow Passover, and are of tremendous importance to righteous disciples of Christ Jesus; for leavening, as obtained through the action of yeast, forms the visible representation of sin or lawlessness, an invisible mindset until manifest through the actions the flesh. Yeast is invisible, or nearly so, to the naked eye. Wild yeast is caught by exposing a starter batch of dough to air. No other action is necessary—and no action will prevent wild yeast from leavening a lump of dough except the rapid baking of the lump shortly after oil and moisture have been added to finely ground flour. Thus, leavening by yeast of dough forms the reasonably accurate shadow of lawlessness contaminating human beings “following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:3). Satan reigns over the mental typography of humanity, just as Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent, as well as over Judea, when Babylon was in its glory. As king of Babylon (Isa 14:4-21), Satan is the spiritual reality foreshadowed by Nebuchadnezzar, just as the flesh of human beings is analogous to the finely ground wheat or barley flour upon which the yeast organism operates.

The correspondence is absolute: leavening by yeast :: sin in human beings. How sin or lawlessness (1 John 3:4) invisibly operates within the mind of a person is revealed or made visible through the mechanisms of yeast entering a lump of dough, growing through feeding on the sugars in the dough, then completely taking over the lump, causing what was heavy and hard to become light and fluffy—and seemingly more desirable.

The Lord through Moses gave the nation of Israel statutes which caused that nation to separate itself from humanity at large—and the first of these statutes, given to the patriarch Abraham, was physical circumcision, whereby the physically concealed [from public view] foreskin of the penis was cut away. Circumcision causes a male descendant of the patriarch to appear naked before the Lord. The only covering this circumcised male has is his obedience to the Lord, for the skin covering that was given to Adam in the Garden (Gen 3:21) is represented by the foreskin, which covers the nakedness of the head of the penis...Eve was also covered by skin clothing, but her physical covering remained that of her husband, which is why sin didn't enter the world through Eve but through Adam.

The patriarch Abraham covered his nakedness by obedience to God.

The reader should now read Genesis chapter 26, verses 1 through 5; followed by Genesis chapter 17; and by Hebrews chapter 11, verses 8 through 12.

Commentary: Abraham is called the father of the faithful not for him obediently keeping the commandments and statutes of the Lord, this obedience being that which the Lord testifies when appearing to Isaac, but because of his act of obedience when called to go to the place he would receive as an inheritance: **obedience is the demonstration of faith!** And from Abram's demonstration of faith when still with his father, who began the journey from Ur to the land Abram/Abraham would receive as an inheritance, comes keeping the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Consider the narrative elements of what occurs:

Tereh took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son's Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there...and Terah died in Haran. (Gen 11:31-32).

Father, son and wife, and grandson leave Chaldea, the geography of Babylon. They journey towards Canaan—their intent is to go to the *Land Beyond the River*. But the father dies before entering the land of Canaan. However, after his father's death, the son, told by the Lord to continue the journey originally undertaken, does as commanded: he, along with his wife and his nephew (his father's grandson), resume the journey to Canaan, and they entered the Promised Land. Four people representing three generations begin the journey; three people representing two generations enter Judea, which is identified by the Psalmist as God's rest (Ps 95:10-11).

Circumcised Israel, physically enslaved in Egypt, yearned for liberation and to return to the land of Canaan. The nation cried out to the Lord for relief, and the Lord, using Moses, began a process with plagues of revealing Himself to both Israel and Egypt, and of making a separation between Israel and Egypt. So at the first Passover, that separation was visibly observable to the death angel that passed through the land: Egyptian firstborns of man and beast—in fact all firstborns not covered by the blood of a paschal lamb—are slain by the Lord. And before morning, the nation leaves for Canaan.

But the nation that left Egypt, like Terah, Abraham's father, didn't enter into God's rest, but died along the way because of that nation's unbelief (Num chap 14). The nation that left Egypt rebelled against the Lord in the wilderness of Paran, where Abraham's son Ishmael dwelt. And the children of the nation the left Egypt, like Abram (Terah's son) and Lot (Tereh's grandson), crossed the River Jordan.

The reader should now read Genesis chapter 12, verses 10 through 20.

Commentary: There was a famine in the Promised Land—and Abram, Sarai, and Lot went down to Egypt, where Pharaoh enriched Abram because of Sarai, whom he took for a wife...as two become one through marriage (Gen 2:24), Abram and Sarai were one, and function as one. Thus, Abram's half-truth about Sarai being his sister caused Pharaoh to enter into their marriage as yeast enters into a lump of dough to take over the entire lump. Pharaoh and Egypt becomes a visible representation of yeast, the representation of sin. Therefore, the following correspondences are also absolute:

Abram & Sarai entering Egypt :: Pharaoh taking Sarai into his house

Egypt :: Pharaoh's house :: yeast entering dough :: sin in human beings

Egypt :: sin, while leaving Egypt :: leaving Chaldea [or Babylon]

Two generations of Terah's descendants first leave Chaldea, journey to Judea, then to Egypt, before being driven out of Egypt, but Terah, himself, only leaves Chaldea. Likewise, the nation liberated by bondage to Pharaoh only leaves Egypt...entering the Promised Land is tantamount to entering God's rest, which corresponds to entering the supra-dimensional heavenly realm, with the Sabbaths of God serving as diminutive representations of God's ultimate rest.

Although the fathers of the nation liberated from bondage to Pharaoh left Egypt only to die in the wilderness, their children entered the Promised Land, but didn't leave behind the idols of Egypt. Not did these children walk in the ways of the Lord (Ezek chap 20). So another set of correspondences emerge:

The idols of Egypt :: Egypt :: sin :: leavening :: Babylon

Babylon, now, represents sin or lawlessness. So the Lord sending Israel into Babylonian exile [the nation of Israel shrank in geographical size until it was no larger than the *polis* of Jerusalem in 586 BCE] directly corresponds to Abram, Sarai, and Lot entering Egypt when famine struck Canaan. The grain harvest in Canaan, by extension, represents Israelites that kept the commandments of the Lord, and walked in His ways—famine in the Judea represents failure of the early and latter rains, with *rain in due season* linguistically corresponding to a *teacher of righteousness*. Therefore,

Drought in Judea :: no teachers of righteousness :: no harvest for God

Drought occurs in the land of Canaan because nations occupying that geographical landscape are out of covenant with the Lord: He withholds His Spirit, represented by the early and the latter rains. And shortly, the people occupying the landscape are driven out through famine—and the famine of His word will afflict the world at the end of the age.

The grain harvest of Egypt wasn't dependent upon the early and latter rains, but upon the Nile River and flood irrigation,

The reader should now read Deuteronomy chapter 11, verses 1 through 17.

Commentary: The grain harvests of Egypt and of Chaldea do not represent the harvest of God, but belong to Pharaoh and to the king of Babylon. So it is expected that the flour made from the grains of these harvests will be leavened with yeast and baked into puffy loaves, for the inhabitants of these lands do not know the Lord, nor worship the Lord as God. With every few exceptions—Daniel and his friends being the primary examples—even Israelites in these lands worshiped the golden idol of the king of Babylon, thereby sharing with sticks and stones their worship of the Lord.

The nation that crossed the Jordan—the children of the nation that left Egypt—went into Babylonian captivity just as Abram through Sarai was taken captive by Pharaoh, when the patriarch journeyed from Canaan to escape drought in that land. And as Pharaoh expelled Abram, and as a different Pharaoh expelled Israel under Moses, the Persian king of Babylon sent a remnant of Israel back to Jerusalem to there build a house for God.

The reader should now read Ezra chapter 1.

Commentary: Like Abram in Egypt and the enslaved Israelites in Egypt, the exiles in Babylon did not free themselves, but were sent from Babylon by decree of the king, this decree directed by the Lord. So when these exiles returned, they were still subjects of the king Babylon. They went to Jerusalem to build the house that the Lord had charged Cyrus, the Persian king of Babylon, to build for the Lord...this is important to remember: the remnant that returned was not an autonomous people; this remnant remained a vassal nation within the Babylonian empire. Israel did not win its liberation until the Maccabean sons of light defeated the Greek Seleucid Empire.

And as the nation that left Egypt did not enter the physical Promised Land because of unbelief (Heb 3:19 & Num 14:11), the remnant that returned from Babylon did not enter the spiritual promised land of God's rest because of its unbelief in Jesus (John 6:60-66). Rather, the spiritual children of the remnant that left Cyrus' Babylon will cross over a spiritual Jordan and journey to where they will dwell in the *Jerusalem above*.

The person conducting Festival services should, at this time, adjourn services, with a hymn, a prayer, and a blessing on the food (if

appropriate). The person should also announce when afternoon services are to commence.

Afternoon Services

At the appropriate time, the person conducting services should resume services with two or three hymns, and a prayer.

The reader should begin afternoon services by reading Ezekiel chapters 20, followed by Jeremiah chapters 16 & 17.

Commentary: Israel's lawlessness in the Promised Land was far worse than was Abraham's and Isaac's telling of half-truths [that their wives were their sisters], or even the deception of Jacob...although it is foolishness to compare one human being with another, even the Apostle Paul engaged in a little of such foolishness to make a point—and the point here is that the movement from the patriarchs to the nation of Israel foregrounds increasing lawlessness and rebellion against God, with the movement from physical circumcision to spiritual circumcision disclosing similarly increasing lawlessness and rebellion.

Since Calvary, the separation of humanity through circumcision doesn't divide according to the flesh, but by receipt of the Holy Spirit [*Pneuma 'Agion*]: circumcision is now of the heart and the mind. The spiritually circumcised Israelite has been born of water [of the womb] and of Spirit (John 3:5). Baptism becomes the ritual of inclusion that equates to physical circumcision for the biological sons of the patriarch Abraham; through baptism, a born of Spirit disciple is made a member of the household of God, upon which judgment has come. Until baptized, a born anew disciple is like a Hebrew infant of less than eight days of age: yes, the infant is of Israel, but is not yet included among the tally of Israelite males. And since physical circumcision causes an Israelite to appear naked before the Lord, covered by only his own obedience, baptism brings judgment upon the disciple, who is covered by the garment of Grace until revealed (Luke 17:30) at the end of the age.

The recovery of Israel at the end of the age isn't recovery of a physical nation, but of the spiritual nation, a chosen people, a royal priesthood that was not a nation prior to birth from above into tents of flesh that are of every color, with indoor and outdoor plumbing, and of various ancestries. It is with this nation that God reasons when He makes the nation pass under the rod.

And the Feast of Unleavened Bread becomes the seven endtime years of tribulation when all of spiritual Israel is to live without sin—or be permanently cut off from the holy nation.

The reader should now read 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 1 through 12.

Commentary: As the Israelite nation that left Egypt rebelled against the Lord in the wilderness of Paran, the Church will rebel against God 220 days into the seven endtime years of tribulation: on a particular day, the Church will demonstrate its unbelief by refusing to enter God's rest when commanded. It will, instead, attempt to enter God's rest on the following day, as is its present custom. But with the revealing of the Son of Man, the garment of Christ Jesus' righteousness will have been removed, and spiritually circumcised Israel will then be as the physically circumcised nation has been since the

patriarch Abraham cut away the foreskins of all the males of his household...Isaac, the firstborn son of promise, wasn't yet conceived when Ishmael was circumcised. Likewise, the spiritual descendants of the greater Church will not have been born anew, or born a second time—their birth awaits the divine Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*] being poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28)—when the Church is revealed, or made spiritually naked before God, its only covering then being its obedience to the laws of God.

So another set of correspondences exist:

Today's Christian Church :: physically circumcised Israel in Egypt.

Physical bondage to Pharaoh :: bondage to sin and death, to disobedience.

Israel's Passover lamb slain in Egypt :: Jesus' death at Calvary.

Israel's liberation :: empowerment or being filled by the Holy Spirit.

The Church entered Babylonian captivity when the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine determined what sound doctrine would be at the Council of Nicea (ca 325 CE). Thus,

Israel's exodus :: the Church leaving spiritual Babylon.

Whereas receipt of the Holy Spirit liberates the mind from disobedience (Rom 8:2), the law of sin and death continues to dwell in the members of disciples, what the Apostle Paul could not understand (Rom 7:25). So within every disciple today, the mind wars with the flesh—and the flesh wins too many battles. But as Israel in Egypt was liberated from bondage to Pharaoh, the representation of sin, the Church will also be liberated from bondage to sin and death through empowerment by the Holy Spirit before the long spiritual night of watching that began at Calvary ends. But the lives of men will again be given as ransom for the Church's liberation as the lives of Egyptians were given for the ransom of natural Israel (Isa 43:3-4).

Too many false prophets would have the plagues of Egypt being repeated before lives are again given to ransom now spiritually-circumcised Israel. These false teachers do not understand where disciples stand in history: Christ Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God has been slain—was slain two millennia ago. And one long night of watching began at Calvary as what was physical becomes spiritual.

The midnight hour has not yet arrived, for lives have not again been given for the liberation of the Church from sin and death. But that midnight hour is not now far in the future. Rather, it is close. Humanity has entered the time of the end, a period that is a little longer than the seven endtime years of tribulation. Roughly, the time of the end corresponds to the practice of the remnant of Israel beginning to keep the days of Unleavened Bread when the paschal lamb entered Jerusalem on the 10th of the first month (this remnant started the seven day festival five days early, making for a twelve day feast season).

Because of the importance placed upon Israel's exodus from Egypt, a story that will not longer be remembered when the spiritually circumcised nation is recovered from sin and death, the story should be familiar to every disciple.

The reader should now read Exodus chapters 7 through chapter 13.

Commentary: These plagues have already spiritually occurred to Israel, and the Passover Lamb of God has been slaughtered. But these plagues will be repeated in type during the Tribulation as God makes a separation between rebelling disciples and the third part of humanity that will be born of Spirit when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15). This third part (Zech 13:9) will form the great endtime harvest, for today's Christian Church, with few exceptions, will rebel against God as Israel rebelled in the wilderness of Paran. Today's

greater Church refuses to eat the Passover sacraments on the night Jesus was betrayed. The sacraments of bread and wine are the fruit of the earth on every other night but the 14th of the first month; they are Cain's offering to the Lord.

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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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