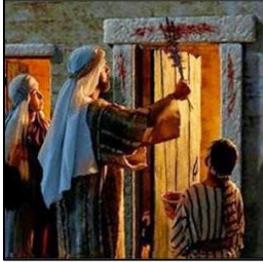


When Did פסח Begin?

Nader Mansour

Published online by:
www.Revelation1412.org



The Jewish feast of Pesach, or Passover in English, is one of the best known of all the feasts. It is the first and primary feast upon which all the others were based. It is first mentioned in connection with the Exodus of the nation of Israel from Egypt.

Exodus 12:11-12 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. 12 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.

Israel was instructed to apply the blood of the lamb to their doorposts to save their firstborn, for the Lord would pass over the door that had the blood. That same night the Exodus occurred and the first Passover was born. God wanted Israel to keep it as a national feast for a memorial of that marvellous deliverance (Exodus 12:14, 23, 24).

Not only was this feast to be a memorial for the exodus, but it would also serve as a type (1 Cor. 5:7). It would point forward to the deliverance of God's people from sin. It is important to note that this event is the historical marker for the commencement of the Passover. God wanted Israel to make sure they never forgot how and when this feast was instituted.

Exodus 12:26-27 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? (27) That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

Every Israelite was to instruct his household as to the meaning of the Passover. They were to teach their children when that feast started, and how God saved them. Every Hebrew child, growing up, would learn that the Passover is the memorial of the exodus. There was no instruction to teach the children that the origin of Passover preceded the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

Today this instruction is largely ignored. I have often heard that Passover existed and was kept long before the exodus. This claim is often made with a certainty and emphasis that is alarmingly devoid of any inspired evidence. Such attempts are believed to bolster the argument of feast keeping today. In so doing, God's instruction is not only ignored, but completely contradicted. No Hebrew parent was at liberty to teach that Passover commenced before Exodus 12. After all, they were there to witness the very event that the feast was to commemorate.

Think about it this way, the name of the feast is Pesach (פסח) in Hebrew. The root of that word means to hop or skip; literally, to pass over. Hence the name in English is based on the action that took place that night, where the Lord passed over the houses with blood. Thus, the idea that Passover existed before the Lord actually passed over is a laughable absurdity. It's like saying Christ actually died long before He was crucified. God clearly indicated the time and place when He passed over. The very name of the feast itself is a standing rebuke to all such inconsistent attempts.

Yet I am often confronted with the teaching that Passover was an ancient feast, more ancient than the exodus from which it sprang. Such a teaching does not add importance to the Passover; it actually destroys it and renders God's instruction to Hebrew parents meaningless. A feast that commemorates the exodus cannot exist before the event it is designed to commemorate! If I was to insist that the queen's birthday is such a prestigious and important event that it was celebrated long before her birth you would question my intelligence, and rightly so. Any effort to portray Passover as having an origin long before the exodus is a contradiction of scripture. Abraham and the pre-exodus patriarchs knew nothing of Passover, let alone did they observe it.



It is of interest to note that Mrs. White recognizes this basic scriptural truth stating "The observance of the Passover began with the birth of the Hebrew nation." {The Desire of Ages, p.76.1}

Some might think that the birth of the Hebrew nation is a reference to Abraham. God told Abraham that He will make of him a great nation (Genesis 12:2) in the future. He later revealed to Jacob that this will take place in Egypt (Genesis 46:3). The birth of the Hebrew nation is when they were brought out of Egypt by God. That's when God gave them the memorial for that miracle.

Let us not contradict God's word in our efforts to promote a cherished view. It is a sad indicator of the confusion that exists today when there are teachings among us that a Hebrew child could readily refute. The feast of Passover began at the exodus, the birth of the Hebrew nation. All the other feasts are connected to the commencement of Passover. Every other feast follows after in its order. The Passover was the most important and primary festival given to the Jewish nation. It was fulfilled by the sacrifice of Christ, who died on the exact time of the typical feast thereby fulfilling it. Let us rejoice in the finished work of Christ, our complete Passover.

*Nader Mansour
May 2016*

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