



March 10, 2023

A Night to Be Much Observed?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

As you know, each Friday I both post and send out a pastor's letter to scattered brethren in English and Spanish. A few years ago while in Colombia on a pastoral visit, several asked me to explain a little more clearly, "Why do we observe the Night to Be Much Observed?" I thought I would again, since it has been awhile, put some things in writing, so you can review the scriptures for your personal Bible Study.

So, why do we emphasize having a gathering of members, or brethren, in various groups and locations to enjoy a meal and fellowship together on the evening that begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Why is to be much observed?

This will take place on Wednesday evening, April 5 this year. This will be the beginning of Abib 15 on the Jewish calendar, with the Bible days beginning at sunset.

The name we use - Night to Be Much Observed - is derived from the King James translation of Exodus 12:42: "*It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt . . .*"

The Israelites remained in their homes during the whole night of Abib 14 and were not to leave their homes until dawn. (Exodus 12:22) They did not leave Egypt during the night that they ate the roasted lamb and awaited being "passed over" by the death angel. We are told when they left Egypt. "*They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all*

the Egyptians." (Numbers 33:3) They left Egypt on Abib 15, (the day following the Abib 14 Passover observance). *"So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt."* (Exodus 12:17) The "same day" clearly refers to the first day of Unleavened Bread.

Lets' look at this event as recorded in Deuteronomy 16. This chapter confuses some because of the use of the term "Passover" there. Deuteronomy 16 focuses on the 3 "*chag*" feast seasons or celebrations: 1. Passover (Unleavened Bread) 2. Weeks (Pentecost) 3. Ingathering (Tabernacles). *"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses..."* (Deuteronomy 16:16)

You'll notice that Trumpets and Atonement are not mentioned, and the chapter actually does not address the Abib 14 Passover ceremony either. The term "Passover" is used at times in Scripture to refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. *"Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover."* (Luke 22:1)

Let's examine a bit closer Deuteronomy 16. *"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night."* (Deuteronomy 16:1)

This reinforces what we read in Exodus 12:42. It was during the night that God led the Israelites from Goshen out of Egypt to Succoth. This above "passover" celebration was accompanied by the sacrifice of both sheep and cattle. *"Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name."* (v.2) The word herd here refers to cattle, not sheep. This is clearly a different instruction from that relating to the lamb selected on Abib 10, and sacrificed on Abib 14 by the head of household, at the individual houses of the families observing the Abib 14 commemoration.

Unleavened bread was to be eaten with these "passover sacrifices" for seven days

and there was an emphasis on "*the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt.*" (v.3) "*And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.*" (v.4)

The "first day" is clearly the first day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread. These passover offerings were to be killed during twilight of Abib 15 and this is emphasized again in verse 6. "*but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt.*" (v.6) They were in their homes during the night of Abib 14. They left Egypt on the next day beginning at twilight of Abib 15.

Here above is a further description of the events involving the departure of the Israelites from Egypt on the night of Abib 15 (beginning at the going down of the sun that initiated the period of twilight). The Israelites were released from their enslavement to Pharaoh and his kingdom. They went out with boldness! (Numbers 33:3) They left in darkness and proceeded toward the land of promise, guided by the fiery pillar and light of the LORD (Exodus 13:21-22).

The analogies are striking! You and I under the New Covenant celebrate our departure from allegiance to the god of this world and his kingdom. We rejoice and celebrate our victory over sin through the deliverance and guidance of our Savior and king! We are told to be bold! (Proverbs 28:1) We leave the darkness of this world of sin and idolatry, and look to the light of God's Spirit and Word to lead and guide us.

I hope you'll remember this evening this year and in the years to come by also reflecting on your new beginning at baptism when you began your journey to the promised Kingdom of God.

The opening night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a night to be observed, remembered, and celebrated in light of its significant history and present spiritual application of the meaning of this "*night to be much observed unto the LORD.*"

Some thoughts to meditate on and consider as we near the end of another week, and look forward to God's Sabbath.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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