



April 12, 2024

### **What a Journey!**

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, 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.

Last Friday evening we continued our discussion of "Why do we DO certain things this time of year?"

So far, we've talked about the Passover and the Night to Be Much Observed. We've also examined the separate celebrations of the Abib 14 Passover at twilight and the departure of the Israelites beginning at twilight of Abib 15 - during the night we have termed the Night to Be Much Observed. This was to be commemorated in the future at the Temple in Jerusalem with feasting on roasted sheep and cattle, unleavened bread, and other items to remember the night the tribes of Israel were freed from Egypt and began their trek to the promised land of Canaan.

The Israelites continued on to march away from Egypt to their first stopover as the night of Abib 15 gave way to the daylight portion of the day. "*Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.*" (Exodus 12:37) As they rested briefly on their first stopping point, they took some nourishment in keeping with the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. "*And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.*" (Exodus 12:39)

I have to wonder, did they cook the dough over an open fire on a stick? Did they have some kind of griddles on which they cooked the dough for a flat cake?

Interestingly, they all came to the location and in a sense assembled together on that first holy day. You can imagine the conversations that took place around those campfires!

It may be that their stopover at Succoth was very brief and they quickly continued on their way after getting something to eat. The Lord Himself was guiding and directing their journey. "*And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.*" (Exodus 13:21) This seems to indicate that they continued to travel part of the time during the night as well as during the day.

As I reflect on this journey in history, it reminds me of growing up. I can remember when traveling to both the spring and fall Holy Days, we would often ask our parents "Are we there yet?" as the trips were lengthy in those early days. I remember my father saying "no, we've got a fair bit to go yet...before we reach our destination!"

So, how far did they get by the end of the seven days of Unleavened Bread?

There are Jewish traditions that claim that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea during the seventh day of Unleavened Bread. The Scriptures do not specifically confirm this and we just don't know for sure. I think it's possible that they crossed the Red Sea at Gulf of Aqaba, perhaps even likely at the site of Nuweiba on the Western shore of the Gulf. There is considerable evidence to support this assertion.

Could the Israelites have arrived at this location by the last day of Unleavened Bread? With the vast number of people involved, as well as animals and the narrow condition of some of the roads they would have traveled on, it is questionable. Again, the Scriptures do not require that the Israelites had to have crossed the Red Sea on the last day of the Feast.

It is very possible that the way or road that God led Israel took them through the wilderness between the two arms of the Red Sea. *"So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt."* (Exodus 13:18)

Why even ask these questions you might ask?

Friends, we'll be celebrating our deliverance by the blood of the Lamb and will celebrate our departure from spiritual Egypt. Our Father and His Son continue to lead us through a spiritual wilderness where we encounter very real trials and challenges.

We may try to figure out "why" our Father and His Son allow us to be where we are or even guide the direction we find ourselves in, and never completely understand in this life. We do though, go through these experiences *"to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."* (Deuteronomy 8:2)

During the seven days of Unleavened Bread we'll also eat some Unleavened bread each of the seven days (Exodus 13:6) and recognized the meaning of *"It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt."* (Exodus 13:9)

It is important we daily study, reflect on, and live God's words as we move forward. We must be "Doers". The Israelites had to learn to trust God, and keep moving when the cloud or fire moved. What a journey!

May you have a faith-filled and awe-inspiring Sabbath, next Sabbath, and upcoming Passover, NTBMO, and Days of Unleavened Bread! Each day, removing sin, and by and allowing Christ to live in us, we must continue to keep our focus, and in spite of all we see in this world right now, not take our mind or thoughts off of our Father, Christ, and their plan and promises!

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 be 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized, scribbled end.

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