

The Days of Unleavened Bread - Appointed Time of Victory for Yahuwah's People

These are the feasts of Yahuwah, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is Yahuwah's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to Yahuwah; seven days you must eat unleavened bread" (Lev. 23:4-6).

As Yahuwah commanded, we His people continue to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread. In doing so we are led to study biblical events that took place during this "appointed time." And herein we see a clear pattern: People being given a clear choice to obey Yahuwah, grow in faith and then see His supernatural deliverance! Such accounts are a source of great courage and inspiration for Yahuwah's people today because He promises us the same victories- specifically the victory over Satan and sin-if we grow in faith and obedience.

Leaving Egypt

Yahuwah brought the children of Israel out of Egypt-the land of their enslavement-on the 15th day of the first month of the sacred year, Abib (Num. 33:3; Deut. 16:1). They did not know where they were going, but were simply to follow Moses and the pillar of cloud/fire that guided them. Yahuwah meant for this experience to be remembered - a lesson to be taught to future generations. He thus instructed the Israelites, "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt (The 15th), out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Yahuwah brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.... Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, *'This is done because of what Yahuwah did for me when I came up from Egypt.'* It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes; that Yahuwah's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahuwah has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore - - keep this ordinance in its season from year to year" (Ex 13:3, 7-10).

So every year as those of The Way keep the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are to be mindful of Yahuwah's powerful miracles in delivering His people - and realize that we serve the same Aluhym today! Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach was the "Rock" who performed powerful miracles and led Israel out of Egypt in a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day (1 Cor. 10:4). That same Savior has promised to never forsake us and to be with us always (Heb. 135; Matt. 28:20). We have every assurance that, just as Yahuwah has given victory to His people throughout the ages, so He will give us victory also!

But lest we mistakenly think the path is easy, biblical examples illustrate that growing in faith comes as a result of overcoming challenges and obstacles. When the Israelites left Egypt, the pillar of fire did not lead them on an easy route to the Promised Land, rather it guided them into the Sinai desert! (Ex. 13: 17- 18). The path they were taking was certainly not one that any *man* would have chosen-but they were learning the lesson of following Yahuwah. Soon they were trapped, with the Red Sea on one side and Pharaoh and his army coming at them from the other (Ex. 14:9). And just when it looked as if they would be recaptured and returned to slavery, Yahuwah performed a spectacular miracle! The sea opened and the Israelites walked across on dry ground (v. 22). Once they were safely across, Yahuwah caused the waters to come crashing together to drown the pursuing Egyptian army (v. 28).

Thus, due to Yahuwah's great miracles, a nation of former slaves was delivered from the most powerful army on earth! After Pharaoh's military might was destroyed on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Moses and Miriam led the Israelites in a song of rejoicing and thanksgiving

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to Yahuwah (Ex. 15:1-21). And consider that this song-called "the Song of Moses-may well be the same one that will be sung by the delivered saints of Yahuwah when Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach returns! (Rev. 15:3). These saints are pictured as just having been victorious over the Beast-of whom Pharaoh was a type or forerunner.

Just as Pharaoh pursued and tried to kill the escaping Israelites, Satan has never ceased from trying to harm Yahuwah's people. But if we truly seek Him, Yahuwah promises us help to resist Satan's attacks (1 Cor. 10:13). And we *need* this help-for the struggle is ongoing. Satan will not give up until he is bound in chains by Yahuwah (Rev. 20:2, 10).

Fleeing Sodom

Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach compared the day of His return to ancient Sodom's day of destruction. *"On the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be so when the Son of Man is revealed."* (Luke 17:29-30) Several other biblical writers also considered Sodom as a prophetic example for us to beware. For the destruction that suddenly came upon that wicked city and her surrounding neighbors was a warning of even greater punishment that Yahuwah will one day unleash upon the whole earth. Jude wrote, *"Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them ... having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"* (v.7).

Even as Abraham's nephew Lot was delivered from the city. Yahuwah's servants are promised protection from the destruction that will accompany Ha'Mashyach's return (Luke 21:36; Rev. 3: 10). Sodom was a wicked society completely swayed by Satan's deceptions. It is an example of what the conditions of modern society will be like in our future-a time when Yahuwah will have to intervene to save mankind from destroying itself (Mal. 4:6). Sodom's fate, then, was a type or forerunner of future punishment to come. Not surprisingly, the Scriptures indicate that Lot and his family fled the destruction of their city during the Days of Unleavened Bread! (Gen.19:3).

Entering the Promised Land

After Moses' death, the responsibility to lead the people of Israel was given to Joshua. Yahuwah spoke to him and promised to be with him and to grant him many victories (Josh. 1:1-10). And the first tests of Joshua's leadership and faith came during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The Israelites were camped several miles east of the Jordan River, opposite the walled city of Jericho. Then they moved camp to the shore of the Jordan in preparation for crossing over (3: 1). Much of what Joshua did during this period in leading the Israelites into the Promised Land foreshadowed the work of Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach leading spiritual Israel into Yahuwah's Kingdom. Joshua had been commissioned to *"go over before this people, and ... cause them to inherit the land which you will see"* (Deut. 3:28).

On the tenth day of Abib they were to cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land. No doubt they recalled that 40 years earlier each family had chosen a Passover lamb on this very day in preparation for the final plague on the Egyptians (Ex. 12:3). What they had no way of knowing was that more than 1,400 years later, *on the same day of the year*; the true Passover Lamb of Yahuwah would ride into Jerusalem, having been chosen by Yahuwah and symbolically accepted by the masses (Matt. 21:1-11).

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The Israelites crossed the Jordan River and had their males circumcised on this day. Both experiences were a type of immersion and conversion (I Cor. 10: 1-2; Rom. 2:29). Then, after healing for four days, they killed Yahuwah's Passover and ate it in remembrance of the Night Much to be Observed, before beginning the attack on Jericho (Josh. 5:10). The symbolism here is obvious. Even today we must first come to repentance and immersion before keeping Amanuwal's Memorial Service. (Ex. 13:48; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 11:28). Coming to see ourselves and our need for Yahuwah's forgiveness is a painful experience-but the pain is soon forgotten when we comprehend what a wonderful future Yahuwah has in store for us (Rom. 8: 18).

The Ark of the Covenant that accompanied the Israelites as they entered the Promised Land symbolized Yahuwah's presence with them. Joshua instructed the priests to carry the Ark and enter the bank of the Jordan. The Israelites were to follow 2,000 cubits, or paces behind – arrayed by tribe. When the priests' sandals touched the water, Yahuwah miraculously held back the flow of the river so that the Israelites could walk on dry ground (Joshua 3:13-14). This miracle is all the more astounding when you consider it was springtime and the river was at flood stage (v. 15). Many Bible scholars feel that this exact place in the river is the spot that would later be crossed in a similar fashion by Eliyah just before he was taken up in the fiery chariot (cf. 2 Kings 2:8) It is also thought to be the location of Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach's baptism (cf. Matt. 3: 13- 16).

The priests stopped in the middle of the riverbed as the Israelites passed by on either side of them. Joshua also instructed a man from each tribe to remove a stone from where the priests' feet stood and carry it to the western shore (Josh 4:3). These stones were to be placed in Gilgal as a memorial and constant reminder of Yahuwah's mighty hand in bringing Israel to the Promised Land (4:7, 20-24). After all the people had crossed over the Jordan, Joshua called to the priests carrying the Ark and bade them come to the western shore as well. And when the feet of the last priest reached the shoreline, the waters of the Jordan began to flow again (4:17-18).

Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach is the firstborn of many brethren into the Kingdom of Yahuwah (Rom 8:29). Recall - Joshua's brethren followed 2,000 cubits behind the priests, the rest of the firstfruits may likely be born into Yahuwah's Kingdom around 2,000 years after Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach was (cf. 2 Peter 3:8). The memorial of the 12 stones, each one representing a tribe of Israel, brings to mind the description of the foundations and gates of the New Jerusalem: *"Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel... The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb:"* (Rev. 21:12, 14). This picture becomes clear when we understand Ha'Mashyach's promise to the apostles that they will have positions of rulership over the tribes of Israel during the Millennium. *"I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Luke 22:29-30).

As we've seen, all Israelite males were circumcised after crossing the Jordan. Four days later they killed the Passover lamb and that evening beginning the 15th day, they kept the first Day of Unleavened Bread in this glorious new land that was to be their permanent home. The next day the daily fall of manna, the "bread from heaven" that had sustained them during their sojourn in the wilderness, ceased (Josh 5:12). Yahuwah Almighty had indeed kept His word to sustain and provide for them until they were brought into this new land flowing with milk and honey. He promises to do the same for us as we look forward to His Kingdom (Phil. 1:6).

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The Walls Came Tumblin' Down

The valley around Jericho was a verdant garden, famous for its splendor and fruit. Known as the "City of Palm Trees," Jericho became the vacation playground of kings, and its beautiful springs produced clear water that welcomed many a traveler. Also famous were its high walls and formidable defensive position. It was known as the strongest fortress in the land of Canaan, capable of withstanding a long siege.

But Jericho was no match for Yahuwah! In fact, it was the first city to be conquered by Joshua. However, there would be no spoils here for the Israelites. For Moses had told each head of household to bring the first of the fruit of the new land to Yahuwah before taking any for his own use (Deut. 26:1-10). The same was true for the nation. The first city taken was by divine decree to be "devoted" to Yahuwah (Joshua 6:17 NRSV). In such a case, no redemption was possible (Lev. 27:28-29). When Jericho fell, Rahab and her family were to be spared and items of precious metal were to be taken into Yahuwah's treasury. But everything else was to be destroyed.

The fall of this famous city took place during the Days of Unleavened Bread. One obvious lesson that the Israelites were to learn during this time was: **"Diligently obey the voice of Yahuwah thy Aluhym, to observe carefully all his commandments"**. (Deut. 28:1)

Yahuwah appeared to Joshua when he was near Jericho and gave specific instructions for the conquest of the city. And while the battle plan might have seemed ridiculous from a military standpoint, Joshua and the Israelites were continuing to learn that obedience to Yahuwah was more important than human reason! Having assured Joshua of complete victory, Yahuwah gave directions for the Israelites to march around Jericho, bearing the Ark of the Covenant, for seven days.

What an eerie sight it must have been from the walls of Jericho! First in the procession came lightly armed men followed by seven priests blowing trumpets continually. These were not the customary silver trumpets, but large rams' horns – the loud, piercing sound of which penetrated to the far distance. They were the same trumpets used to signal the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24) – The Feast of Trumpets – and to announce the year of Jubilee (25:9)

Just as the seven trumpets in Revelation will announce the return of Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach (Rev. 8:1-6), these trumpets announced that Yahuwah's very presence was in the Ark, which was borne by priests following the trumpeters in the procession. A group of Israelite men followed last of all. All was to be silent during the procession except for the sound of the trumpets. What a strange and unusual way to attack a city!

But so it went, the Israelites circling the city once during each of the first six days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These days picture the next step after coming to repentance and immersion – learning to obey Yahuwah and resist temptation. And that's just what was happening. The Israelites were learning to obey as they marched around the city in silence. Instead of following human reason, they were carefully following the instructions Yahuwah had given them.

On the last Day of Unleavened Bread, the procession of the men, Ark, and trumpeters circled Jericho seven times. Everyone was silent until, at the end of the last march around the walls, Joshua gave the command to should! *"So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets.... And the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the*

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people went up into the city” (Josh. 6:20) This final great shout and blast of the trumpet will again be heard when Amanuwal returns: “For Yahuwah himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of Yahuwah” (I Thess. 4:16)

With the seventh and final Day of Unleavened Bread came complete victory for Yahuwah and His people. No reader can fail to miss here the significance of the number seven – seven horns, seven priests, seven days of compassing the walls, repeated seven times on the seventh day! Also, the destruction of this great city came on the seventh day Sabbath and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. Jericho typified the kingdoms of this world and their defiance of Yahuwah – and its sudden destruction is a vivid prophecy of how this society and its kingdoms will come to a very sudden end! (1 Thess. 5:3; Rev 18:8, 19). That coming victory will also be complete – for the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of Yahuwah, and He shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15)

Joshua and the Israelites learned to obey Yahuwah and trust in Him through this experience. In fact, the book of Hebrews states, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days” (11:30). So we have here an illustration of what real faith is – **believing Yahuwah enough to obey Him**. In addition to that, knowing that since we truly believe Yahuwah and are striving to obey Him, **He will give us the final victory over sin in our lives!**

When we observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread, we should keep in mind the lessons that our forefathers in the Bible learned during these days (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). We should reflect on Moses' leading the Israelites out of Egypt on a route that required following wherever Yahuwah led them in the wilderness. We also need to see clearly that this society is becoming more like Sodom and Gomorrah and that we must “come out of her” if we are going to escape the destruction as Lot did (cf. Rev. 18:4). And the thrilling account of Yahuwah leading Joshua and the rest of Israel across the Jordan River and conquering the city of Jericho should inspire us to be diligent to carefully obey Yahuwah's instructions. All of these accounts are lessons for us – indeed types of what will befall the earth in the years just ahead. How exciting it is to visualize these events and realize that Yahuwah wants to give us victory just as He gave it to the Israelites of old!

The Almighty is always faithful to keep His word and fulfill His promises to us. If we learn the lessons of these days – having faith and enduring to the end – then we too can look forward to victory and to standing near Yahuwah's throne and singing the song of Moses alongside our brethren who have gone before, as described in *Revelation 15:2-3: "And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of Yahuwah. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of Yahuwah, and the song of the Lamb, saying: 'Great and marvelous are Your works. Lord Yahuwah Almighty!'"*