



The name of the festival, Pesach in Hebrew, passing over or protection, is derived from the instructions given to Moses by God (Ex. 6:6-8). Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel:

*Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD (Ex. 6:6-8).*

Passover is the time of beginnings for Israel. This festival ushers in the coming of spring on the Jewish calendar. It is celebrated on the fourteenth<sup>1</sup> day of Abib (the first month of the Jewish religious calendar, later called Nisan). Each of the three pilgrimage festivals Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles has an agricultural basis as well as an historical significance. Many different things are celebrated during Passover. A few of these include: the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the growing season; the new lambing time, and the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt during Passover.

It cannot be overemphasized as to how foundational Passover is in God's eternal redemption plan. Only Nisan can be the first month in God's calendar. Though other cycles and other aspects of life in the LORD are important, it is the sacrifice of the Lamb that gives it all meaning. Except for the sacrifice of the Passover and the blood on the doorposts, Israel would have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians.

The promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have then become void. With no Passover sacrifice and with no blood on the doorposts, then no Torah could have been given and no other celebrations could have followed. Apart from the sacrifice of the Passover and the blood on the door posts, there would have been no basis for Messiah, our Passover, to be sacrificed on the anniversary of that momentous occasion. We would have no hope and remain dead in our sins; however, the command was obeyed and deliverance was accomplished. Indeed, for us, this is most certainly the first of all the months, the first month of the year, truly the real beginning of all spiritual life (Michael 1996).

God directs parents, this special night of the year, to take on the role of teacher, and pass down His story of the exodus from Egypt to future generations. This ceremony not only looks back to the miraculous story of God delivering His people, but it also presents the promise of Messiah's death and resurrection. It is an exciting experience centering on a mixture of ritual foods. The matzah, bitter herbs, wine, and the rest, provide a lasting link through the march of history.

### **Israel's Redemption from Egypt (Exodus 1:1-18:27)**

The Old Testament story of Passover has more light, more splendor, more vividness, and a richer application to life than any other story in the book of Exodus. Moses and his brother Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him that the Lord said to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites, even for a brief visit to the desert to worship their God. In fact, he made life for the Israelite slaves even worse. Moses had warned Pharaoh that God would send a series of plagues upon Egypt unless the people were freed.

God sent the plagues to show the people that He is the one true God. He confronted the things that the Egyptians called gods. The ten plagues were righteous plagues, and justly inflicted upon the Egyptians because each plague had something to do with the false gods that the Egyptians worshipped. God makes those false things that we worship a burden to us.

The word plague is from the Hebrew word oth, which means "sign". The Egyptians believed in magic. They were always trying to override the laws of nature to perform their "tricks" God used the laws of nature to bring about His signs and wonders.

The entire episode of the plagues is supposed to have happened within eight to ten months. Each of the plagues spoke as a sign to the Egyptians, showing them that He is greater than their so-called gods. The first three plagues affected all the people, even the Hebrews. The next three plagues were much more intense and only happened to the Egyptians (I will put a division between my people and thy people v. 23). Before each plague, God commanded Moses and Aaron to warn Pharaoh, *Let My people go or I [God] will bring a plague upon you. Before each plague, for three weeks, Moses warned Pharaoh.* The actual plague lasted one week.

**Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread** are held in immediate sequence. These are distinctly different holidays falling on different days; however, due to their closeness they are usually treated as one festival. (The scriptures seem to teach that these are two names for the same festival. See Exodus 13:3-8.)

## Pentecost or Shavuot Overview

There are many names for the Feast of Weeks. It is identified in the Old Testament as the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22) and the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16). As explained in the previous chapter, this feast is referred to as Latter Firstfruits. The Hebrew name is Shavuot (pronounced sha-voo-ote). The Greek name Pentecost is only found in the New Testament (Acts 2:1).

Pentecost is a major festival and has a dual significance: historical and agricultural, just as Passover and Tabernacles. Unlike Passover and Tabernacles, it is observed for only two days (only one in the Reform Movement). Pentecost marks the end of the barley harvest and beginning of the wheat harvest. Counting the days from the second day of Passover to Pentecost is called the "Counting of the Omer" (see previous chapter). The cutting of the omer of the new barley marked the beginning of the counting period; on the fiftieth day, Pentecost is observed. Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fiftieth.

First Pentecost	Pentecost After Christ
The Commandments Given	The Holy Spirit Given
Fifty days from the crossing of the Red Sea	Fifty days from the resurrection of Christ
Law of Yahweh written in Stone	Law of Yahweh written on our hearts
Three thousand slain	Three thousand receive salvation
The letter of the Law	The Spirit of the Law

Pentecost is considered the closing festival of the Passover season (Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:15; Deut. 16:9-10). This day is further referred to as “latter firstfruits” of the spring harvest. The “early firstfruits” (barley) were waved before the Lord during the Feast of Firstfruits (see Passover chapter) and the “latter firstfruits” (wheat) were offered unto the Lord during the Feast of Weeks. It is also referred to as the Day of the Congregation (Deuteronomy 18:16). Another name is Atserret, meaning stop or cease or conclusion of seven weeks of counting.

Pentecost is the only festival for which no specific date is given in the Bible. Rather, the people were instructed to count seven weeks “...from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf [omer] of the wave offering (Lev. 23:15). This holiday occurs in the months of May or June on the American calendar. It is the successful conclusion of the first wheat-growing season and the anniversary celebration of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

It is a celebration to reawaken and strengthen personal relationships with God by rededication to the observance and study of the Torah — the most precious heritage. When Yahweh revealed Himself on Mount Sinai, His people heard His voice proclaiming the Ten Commandments. Then the Israelites pledged their allegiance to Yahweh by saying, “...All that the Lord has hath said will we do and be obedient” (Exod. 24:7).

Passover freed God’s people physically from bondage, but the giving of the Torah on Shavuot redeemed us spiritually from our bondage to idolatry and immorality. The Torah contains the Five Book of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings.