

Sermon for Saturday

Here are this week's Torah portions to be read prior to Shabbat, which our First Fruits Ministries sermon is based on: Torah – Exodus 10:1-13:16 | Prophets – Jeremiah 46:13-28 | Gospels – John 19:31-37 (Here is a link: <https://bit.ly/3Jjtfel>).



Shabbat Shalom!

Before I get into this week's message, I want to communicate something to you about my prayers and contemplations this past week, and hopefully proceed from there with a sense of peace and wholeness that only the Holy Spirit can provide. I felt humbled this week to the point that I needed to step back from some work I was doing and spend some time pondering what exactly it is that I'm doing—that is, what I am I doing up here speaking with you teaching God's Word? Most of you know that the Lord called me to be a Pastor, something I didn't ask Him for before He called me to do it. I think retrospectively the Lord was preparing me for the role for quite some time, but many times over I thought the idea was not realistic. It kept resurfacing. I won't get into the particulars, because that's not the point I'm getting at. When He did call me, I felt similar to the way I felt this week, and then I realized with the help of a friend and brother in Messiah that this feeling is good and something I need to fully embrace and never let go of.

Specifically, I felt completely and totally unqualified and unworthy for this role. I felt terrified—not of anything in the world, but of God who will judge me. We saw how Moses responded when the Lord called Him from the burning bush. Was it disobedience he expressed when giving excuse after excuse for why he couldn't be the one God was calling, or was it a feeling of true humility? We discussed this a few weeks ago. I pray it was the latter, because I'm standing in that place before God Most High, and His calling still burns inside me, and I cannot help but obey. Is it more terrifying to obey God and stumble or fail to obey Him? But who am I to stand up and speak God's Word in front of the people whom God created and called to know Him? Or even more serious than that, who am I to stand up here in front of anyone and teach what God's Word means and try to impress what it might mean to you? I can only beg and plead with God to put His words in my mouth, to touch your hearts with His intentions, to bring conviction for repentance, to bring everyone with ears to hear into His presence—for real—through an authentic confession of faith in Yeshua and obedience to His will.

I can't do it in the flesh. It's impossible. This is the Truth that I must never let fade away. I can't do it. Only He can do it through me, and I pray that He does. And yet I also pray, brothers and sisters, that God keeps me from stumbling, and not just for your benefit but also my own. It is quite clear that I will receive a much stricter judgement on account of what I say to you, and this truly terrifies me. But it also terrifies me to lead someone astray, or to push them away from Christ. I don't want to be responsible for that, and more importantly, I don't want to do it. I asked a brother in Messiah Yeshua who also teaches the Word of God himself about my thoughts this week, and He replied, saying this: "I'm glad you feel unqualified. I'm unqualified. The moment we think otherwise we need to step down. [God's] strength is made perfect in weakness."

And so yes, I stand here asking God to empty me of any pride, any desires, any goals, any ideas whatsoever that might come from me, because I am unqualified. I'm not worthy. I am weak. And I also ask God to fill me with His Word to share with you, because my faith in His promise to do this is the only way that I can come up here and speak with you. He is strong, and I pray for His strength to come through me and overcome my weaknesses. And I may still stumble, and for that I beg forgiveness from God Most High in the Name of Yeshua, as well as from you, and also that when this happens He picks me back up. I also pray in His mighty name that He uses me always for His purposes and that I never develop any other intention than this.

James, the half-brother of Yeshua, communicates the most terrifying guidance about all of this that I know of. In James 3:1-19, He writes: “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

And so in my weakness, I pray for the meekness of wisdom, I pray for pure, peaceable and gentleness in me toward all of you. I pray that clarity, discernment, mercy and fruit comes from our meetings here, with all the glory directed toward God. I pray that I treat everyone the same way, and that everything I say can be applied equally regardless of the circumstances. At the same time, I also pray that I might be able to detect and redirect any who might teach from the other perspective that James writes about. I pray for edification in the Lord for all of us, for we are all students of God’s Word, and I pray for the joy and peace that such edification ought to bring, in Yeshua’s name. Amen.

And so, as we get into this week’s Torah Portions, it’s interesting that God has me once again pondering and exploring the title of this week’s study. For those who do not

yet have our weekly Torah Portion guide, which is available on our website, firstfruits.cc, our readings come from Exodus 10:1-13:16; Jeremiah 46:13-28; and John 19:31-37. This Torah Portion is called “Bo,” which comes from the first verse of the reading: “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, so that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell in the presence of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, so that you may know that I am the Lord.’” Most Torah Portion plans you might see translate the word “Bo” to “go.” With Israel about to go out of Egypt following the first Passover, we might just gloss over this and accept that translation, but I don’t think we should. Our affiliate church, Corner Fringe Ministries, used the English title “come” for this week’s Torah Portion, and that puzzled me at first until I looked at the Hebrew. According to Strong’s Concordance, the word “Bo” actually means “go in” or “come in,” or perhaps even “bring in,” and that certainly gives us reason to stop here for a long moment and explore a few concepts that give this week’s Torah Portion way more meaning than you might see by quickly reading it.

First of all, the verse itself refers to Moses going in before Pharaoh at a time when the king of Egypt had hardened his heart past the point of no return. He had made up his mind that he was not going to obey God, but would rather seek his own way. Last week we compared the pride of Pharaoh to the pride of Satan, and it is my belief that Pharaoh is analogous to Satan in this story. Because of Pharaoh’s pride and rebellion against the Lord, which were so far Pharaoh’s own choice, the Lord would now harden Pharaoh’s heart. He would do this as a judgment against Pharaoh for his rebellion, but also to show His glory to everyone who is observing the situation or who hears about it later—not just the Israelites, but all of the nations.

When Moses went in before Pharaoh in today’s reading, he was standing in a position of strength, with God fully backing everything he was doing because Moses’s heart had embraced God’s calling with total faith in God’s promises. In reality, God had gone into Pharaoh through Moses to overthrow the Egyptian king and to release his prisoners with a mighty hand. Pharaoh tried to hold on to some semblance of authority to the very end. It’s remarkable. At first, Pharaoh relented and told Moses to take the men into wilderness to serve the Lord, but to leave the women, children and animals behind. God brought locusts, and then darkness when Pharaoh reneged on the offer. Then Pharaoh said to bring the men, women and children, but leave the animals. This was the last straw. God “brought in”—there’s that word “Bo”—His last plague to Pharaoh, the death of every first born in the land. Pharaoh would not win this battle of

wills. Anyone who obeyed God and spread the blood of the Passover Lamb on their doorposts had their first born spared, but anyone who did not trust in the blood of the lamb would lose their first born. Pharaoh was not a believer, and thus he did not trust in the blood. For this, he lost his own firstborn and eventually his kingdom. When God goes in to a situation, as He did through His servant Moses, God alone is going to be victorious.

I could go into way more textual analysis concerning this story, and we will come back to the first Passover as it is presented in our reading, at least, but there are a few other concepts I want to point out to you about the word “Bo” in today’s message, and I intend to use this as a launchpad for our focus today. There is a concept in Biblical Hermeneutics, which is the study of how to properly interpret Scripture, called “the law of first mention” or “the law of first appearance.” The law of first mention calls for students of the Bible to refer back to whenever a word or concept first appears in Scripture, and usually that occurs in the book of Genesis. This law states that the way a word is used in that first instance is a key for understanding the concept throughout the rest of Scripture. While the concept may be developed to a greater extent in later verses, the first mention creates a foundation on which it can be understood.

Regarding the word “Bo,” it first appears in Genesis 2:19, which reads: “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.” The words “brought them” or “brought them in” is derived from our word in question, “Bo.” And so here, we see that the Lord is bringing in “every animal of the field and every bird of the sky” for Adam, the man made in the image of God, to name them.

I will get to how this is relevant for our reading, but first I want to unveil another layer of meaning within this text in Genesis. We can certainly look at the plain meaning of the text and say that God is simply allowing Adam to become a co-creator with Him. While God is creating animals to keep Adam company on the sixth day, God is allowing Adam to name them, making Adam a partner in the first relationship between God and man, a relationship, sadly, that Adam rejected when he ate of the tree that gave him knowledge of good and evil. God desired this relationship with Adam, and was giving Adam an analogous relationship with the animals. Nevertheless, at this point in the creation story, God is allowing Adam to give names—or identity—to the creation He is giving to Adam, and all of this is a free gift.

Next I want to point out what could be a deeper layer of meaning here. In this pre-sin, pre-fall relationship, Adam was literally giving these animals names. I wonder whether there is a metaphor here meant for the time to come, when our Messiah Yeshua would literally write the names of both Jewish and Gentile believers in the Lamb's Book of Life on account of their faith in Him and their obedience to His commandments? In Revelation 21:27, we see that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be able to enter the New Heaven and the New Earth, which is God's eternal Kingdom—His renewed Garden of Eden.

Paul takes some time in his first letter to the Corinthians to contrast the First Man Adam with the Second Man Christ, which gives me an interesting draw for this analogy. Consider 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, where Paul speaks about our existence in the flesh, which is passing away, and our future existence in Christ when He returns, which is available to us if we chose to live in Him now. Paul says, "And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."

And so, to interpret this passage with our verse from Genesis, the image of the man of dust, Adam, which we bear, was originally made in the image of God before He fell, and then he fell and we are currently living in that state, in the image of Adam. Seth, we read in Genesis 5:3, was made in the image of Adam. However, now that Messiah has come and sacrificed Himself on account of our sin so that we can be made right with God, we now return to our intended state of being, which is bearing the image of God, when we have faith in Christ and follow in His ways. We have an opportunity in Yeshua to return to the state where we are naked with God and not ashamed, walking in the Garden of Eden forever.

Bear with me, for I want to show you yet one more layer of meaning here in this Genesis verse, which I will then relate to our readings in Exodus. We read in 1 Chronicles 7:14, the Lord say, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." This is not all that different from the Gospel message, which is "repent and hear the good news" (Mark 1:15), and "Call on the name of Yeshua and you shall be saved" (Romans

10:13). And the good news is this: the Messiah has come to die for us, as our Passover Lamb, so that by His blood we can be redeemed and once more bear the image of God. Consider what the Lord says during His intercessory prayer in John 17 in the following key verses. In verses 1-2, we read: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." And in verses 11-12, we read: "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." And so, if you are following me on this, God has literally brought "all flesh" to the person whom Paul calls "the second Adam," so that He can give them God's name, or God's image, so that they can be reunited with the Father through the Son, on account of the Sacrifice that the Son is about to make on the cross as the Passover Lamb of God.

You may see where I'm going with this, for our Messiah Yeshua is clearly compared with the Passover Lamb. In John 1:29, John the Baptist saw Yeshua walking toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" And so if Yeshua Himself is metaphorically linked with a lamb, yes, but more specifically the Passover Lamb, so too are we metaphorically linked with animals all throughout Scripture, and even sheep at times. This takes us to our last layer of meaning for Genesis 2:19, our first reference for the word "Be," where Adam is naming the animals that God is bringing before him.

Within the story of Cornelius, the Roman soldier who became a Christian in Acts 10:1-11:18, we can take a closer look at Peter's vision in Acts 10:9-16, when God gave him the understanding that Jews were to accept Gentiles as brothers in the name of Messiah Yeshua. From Acts 10:9-16, we read: "Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.' And a voice spoke to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again." Even in this vision, we see that Peter was calling these unclean animals "common," and God

was telling Him not to do this. God was not talking about unclean animals, though, but people. Gentiles to be exact. After his vision, Cornelius's men asked Peter to return with them and Peter obliged, saying upon his arrival in verses 28-29: "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for."

Peter's vision was foretold in Isaiah 43:18-23, where we read: "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise." You see, jackals and ostriches are represented by "four-footed animals," "wild beasts," and "birds of the air," but more specifically, they are unclean animals. Peter makes it clear that he has never eaten unclean food, and importantly, his vision doesn't change that. However, God is establishing the Isaiah 43 prophesy with this vision; He is doing a new thing, where the so-called "unclean" Gentiles will honor God; they shall declare His praise. They shall be called by His name. The Lord called Cornelius to be grafted-in to Israel, and He called Peter to accept his conversion and welcome him into the faith. This vision helps bridge the gap, which is represented by "the former things," or the Rabbinical laws and interpretation of Scripture that prevented the mixing of Jews and Gentiles. With this story, God is in the midst of tearing down that middle wall of separation and doing a "new thing." He is giving a new name to the Gentile "jackals," which they share with the children of Israel who come to accept their Messiah, and that name is "sons and daughters of God."

I want to show you one more thing in our story with Peter and Cornelius to hammer this point home. Consider Acts 10, verses 34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." While he continues speaking and sharing the Gospel with Cornelius and his house in verses 44-46, "the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word." Because of this Spiritual gift and sign of salvation, Peter commands these Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Yeshua. This event fulfills the prophesy of Joel 2:28, which reads, "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions."

And so, when we read in Isaiah 43:1, “But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine,” we know that God is speaking about His chosen people, Jew and Gentile, who belong to Him and are called by His name. In John 10:7-18, 25-27, Jesus essentially repeats this same truth: “Most assuredly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ... If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture,” he says. “I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd. ... My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

And so, to finalize this law of first mention reference, it seems to me that the Father is bringing before Adam all of the animals He created, and Adam is giving them a name. Were they separated, clean from unclean at this time? If so, did God do this, or did Adam? The text does not say, but we later see that God sends seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals onto the Ark to save them from the great deluge that He used to destroy the wicked in Genesis 6-9. At the very least, Noah was aware of what was clean and unclean, but even more so, perhaps he prepared a place for them on the ark before they arrived? Perhaps this knowledge was passed down by Adam through his generations and eventually made it to Noah? We don’t know, but the metaphors and prophesy we could uncover here could take us years. So with that, let me clearly state the parallel I have seen in the New Covenant. In like manner to what God has done with Adam, the Father is now bringing all flesh before the Son, and the Son is giving His name to those who trust in and obey Him. He will one day separate them clean from unclean; those who trust in and obey Him as opposed to those who don’t, and at that time, only His sheep who hear and respond to His voice, whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, where He has prepared a place for them.

You may have noticed what could be called a mixed metaphor in this last analogy, and I want to point out that I put this in there intentionally. While Adam may have named both clean and unclean animals, and both clean and unclean animals made it onto Noah’s ark, just in different proportions, the unclean or lawless humans will not all make it into Heaven at the End of the Age. There is something about this mixed metaphor that relates directly to our story in Exodus when God institutes the Passover

meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For those who are not aware of this feast, allow me to quote Scripture to briefly introduce it.

In Exodus 12:21-27, Moses explains the feast to the elders of Israel, as we read: “Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; but when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to strike you. And you shall keep this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has promised, you shall keep this rite. And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ then you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord because He passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’” It was because of this event in Egypt that Pharaoh didn’t just let Israel go, but he actually drove them out of Egypt by force, for all the people of Egypt who had not turned their hearts to the Lord were terrified of the Israelites by this point and their country was left in ruins.

Later we see in Exodus 12 a peculiar passage, which we need to hone in on for today’s message, particularly regarding the feast that God set up here. This is the passage I’ve spent all this time setting up. In Exodus 12:43-49, we read: “And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat it; but as for every slave that someone has purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. A stranger or a hired worker shall not eat it. It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring any of the meat outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. But if a stranger resides with you and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, all of his males are to be circumcised, and then he shall come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised male may eat it. The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who resides among you.”

First of all, we see this: “All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this.” This may seem straightforward, but it’s not. Remember that “Israel” means “striver with God” and hold onto that meaning. “Foreigner” in this passage, where we read, “no foreigner is to eat it,” is *nay-khar* (נֶכָּחַר), and the word means alien or strange. This is NOT the word *goyim*, which means nations; the word the New Testament sometimes refers to as

Gentiles. And so, the plain meaning here is that those who are alien to the ways of Israel should not be partaking in Passover. The word “stranger” in the first instance, where the text reads, “a stranger or a hired worker shall not eat it,” is “toshav (תושב),” which means sojourner, or someone who is temporarily dwelling within the community. The words “stranger or a hired worker” actually are meant to be read together, as in, someone dwelling temporarily in Israel as a servant. Thus, this refers to anyone who is not yet a believer but hanging around with us. This person should not partake in Passover, either. However, when we read—“if a stranger resides with you and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, all of his males are to be circumcised, and then he shall come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land”—the word “stranger” here is a different word. It’s actually “gare (גר),” which can be translated as sojourner or stranger, but is often associated with proselyte, or someone who has converted into the faith. And so also when we read, “The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who resides among you,” the word “stranger” in this verse is also “gare.”

Earlier, in Exodus 12:19 we read, “For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.” The word in this verse is also “gare.” Importantly, here we see that those who are of Israel—those who are strivers with God—whether they are native Israel by blood or strangers “gare” who have become a proselytes or converts to the faith of Israel, must celebrate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or they will be cut off from among the congregation. They are literally excommunicated from the faith.

For many years, Jews (and many Christians) have regarded this passage in a different manner than where we’re going to land. They look to the plain meaning of the text, that a Gentile must convert to the faith of Israel and circumcise the foreskin of their flesh in order to participate in the Passover feast. We saw this play out in Peter’s vision in Acts 10, where we read Peter say, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” To be clear: It is unlawful according to the interpretation of men for Jews to avoid eating with Gentiles. It isn’t unlawful according to the law of God, for this would be a contradiction right within the same statement. And so we see Peter conclude a new interpretation from the Holy Spirit a little later on when he said, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” That is, anyone who has faith in Yeshua and keeps God’s commandments is now a part of Israel.

And so while it took us a while to get here, I will point out that this is the rationale for the mixed metaphor earlier. While Jewish interpretation previously prohibited the mixing of Jews and Gentiles, what they called clean and unclean, a Spiritual interpretation indicates that God prohibits the mixing of the Holy with the profane, the believer with the unbeliever. This is why clean and unclean animals are both on Noah's Ark, but only the people with "clean hands and clean hearts" will enter God's Kingdom. This bears out in Scripture, and I'll give you two references, one from the Old Testament and one from the New. In Ezekiel 44:23, we read that it is the duty of the good priest to "... teach [God's] people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean." This follows a passage in verse 10 where God is bemoaning the Levites who strayed from Him and worshipped idols instead. Clearly, to be holy is to be righteous and to be profane is to sin and fall into lawlessness. In 1 Corinthians 10:21, Paul writes: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." It's clear he's referring to Passover here (among other things), for this is the Lord's table that He has asked us to "do in memory of [Him]." Thus, when we read in Exodus about those who should participate in the feast, the distinction is simple. Those who have the faith of Israel, they believe in Israel's God and keep His commandments, are those who can partake in the Passover feast. Israel's God so happened to reveal Himself in the New Covenant as our Messiah Yeshua, and so the very clear definition of those who should "keep the feast," as Paul writes earlier, are those of faith who come sinless before the Lord's table, regardless of whether their heritage is Jewish or Gentile. Those who should not come are those who are living in sin or reject the Messiah who forgives sin. As Paul later writes in Galatians 5:9, "a little leaven leavens the whole loaf," or in 1 Corinthians 5:8, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Sin, the prophetic meaning of leaven built into the feasts of Passover, First Fruits and Unleavened Bread, cannot be found among the body of a Messianic people when they come to sit down at the feast.

You may be thinking: "But the text in Exodus also says, 'no uncircumcised male shall eat it,' and you haven't talked about that yet. Do I have to be circumcised in the flesh to celebrate Passover?" And if you're female, there might be some other questions that come up, such as, "Do I have to be married to a circumcised male or am I just not welcome?" This really does require a lengthy study to answer the question fully, and I won't be able to get to it all today. Pastor Daniel Joseph of Corner Fringe Ministries has a 21-part sermon series called, "Galatians Unearthed" (<https://>

www.cornerfringe.com/media/series/7pz8hnm/galatians-uneearthed), which goes into this question in great detail. I highly recommend it. The short answer is: No, you don't have to be circumcised in your physical flesh to celebrate Passover or married to someone who is, but you do have to be circumcised of your flesh, and this is a requirement whether you are male or female. To be circumcised of your flesh means to have the sin literally cut out of the thoughts and intentions of your heart.

When we read in Genesis 17:11 that God tells Abraham, "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you," there are two key points in this verse. First, circumcision is a "sign" or "seal" or "mark" of the Old Covenant, and second, we are not party to the Old Covenant, we are party to the New Covenant. We can see Paul write very clearly in several places that we have a different circumcision in the New Covenant—we have a different "sign" or "seal" that proves we belong to God and are party to His promises. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, we read: "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." You see, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us in the New Covenant, and the Holy Spirit works in us to circumcise our hearts, cutting out the sin that was once a part of our fleshly nature. This is the "sign" of the New Covenant. Paul writes about this another way in Colossians 2:10-12, where we read: "And you have been made complete in Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority. In whom also you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in the removal of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised with Him through the faith of the working of God, the One having raised Him out from the dead."

In Ezekiel 36:26-27, the Lord explains that He is going to do this: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." In Jeremiah 31:31-34, He is even more clear: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all

shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” And in two other Old Testament verses, God gets to the heart of the issue directly, pun intended. Consider Deuteronomy 30:6, where we read: “Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live.” And Consider Jeremiah 4:4, where we read: “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your hearts, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will spread like fire And burn with no one to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds.”

It's not just the Gentiles who are circumcised by the Holy Spirit in their hearts, though, it is also the Jews. We read Paul write about this very clearly in Romans 2:28-29, where we read: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” And really the clarifying verse that I'll finish off with is Ephesians 2:11-12, where we read: “Therefore remember that previously you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the people of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the hostility, which is the Law [made up of the] commandments expressed in [dogma], so that in Himself He might make the two one new person, in this way establishing peace; and that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the hostility. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Our New Testament reading this week was John 19:31-37, where we read about how Yeshua was crucified on Passover as our Passover Lamb as the high Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread drew near. Just like the lambs that were slain in Egypt

during the first Passover, our Lamb of God's bones were not broken, but He was pierced through the side, fulfilling prophecy built into the Passover meal.

And so, just to bring us back full circle, through faith in Messiah Yeshua, we now have God who comes in [Bo] to us and circumcises our hearts to cut the sin out of our lives so that we can go and sin no more. With true faith, we should see observable changes of words and behavior in a person. One who was once far off, living in the sins of the flesh, is now walking in righteousness with the help of God through Christ. This is the person who God welcomes to join Him at His Passover celebration.

In 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, Paul writes a scathing rebuke to the men of Corinth for the manner in which they are keeping the Passover Feast, and if you are reading the section carefully, you will see that it is a direct interpretation of what we read about aliens and sojourners in Exodus 12:43-49 as well as the importance of keeping the feast with unleavened hearts as we read from Exodus 12:19.

We'll read an excerpt from 1 Corinthians 11:23-32: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a person must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not properly recognize the body. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number are asleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world."

I could really write an entire series on this section of Exodus that we've touched on today, but I want to wrap up for now because today is not Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread doesn't begin until the evening of April 5 this year (2023). There are other metaphors and foreshadows of Yeshua we could study. For example, God asked Israel to sanctify their first born because they were spared by the angel of death on account of the blood of the lamb. Christ, we read in Colossians 1:18 or Revelation 1:5, the Lamb who shed His blood on our behalf so the Angel of Death would pass over our

souls and not throw us into the lake of fire, “is the firstborn from the dead,” the First Fruits of the Harvest that is to come, and we will all follow Him into God’s Kingdom if we endure in our faith and keep the commandments of God. We’re warned, both Old Testament and New, to take this Feast seriously, to use it to remember the deliverance that God gave Israel from the bondage of Egypt and to remember the deliverance that Yeshua gave each of us from the bondage of sin and death, but also, to not take part in the feast if we are uncircumcised or uncommitted to Yeshua, the God of Israel. We need to be all in. He asked us to celebrate in memory of Him, and previously He asked us to celebrate the feast as an everlasting commandment. In Luke 22:18, He said, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” And so we will keep the Feast forever, even after He returns, and so we certainly should keep the feast now as a memorial for what He has done for us. Now is the time to begin preparing for this most holy day. Now is the time for us to get introspective and start looking for the leaven in our lives that still needs to be removed. Let’s help each other with this. I shared the Mighty Men self-assessment with you a few weeks ago, and I can get you a copy upon request, but if you visit our web page on the page labeled, “the Body,” you can download a copy from under the description of Mike Sutcliffe and the Mighty Men program. Fill it out. Share it with me or with someone you trust, and get to work on your relationship with Yeshua. It’s the only relationship we have that is guaranteed to last forever, if we trust and obey our Lord. Shabbat shalom.