

## From Manna to Matzah: Passover in the Time of Joshua

Passover Haftorot for the First Day of Passover

Joshua 3:5-7, 5:2-6:1, 6:27



The *Haftorah* for the first day of *Pesach* describes the first Passover following the Israelites sojourn in the wilderness. Throughout the years in the wilderness the people lived on Manna, divine food that God rained on the nation each day. Once they crossed the wilderness it was time for the people to grow up and move on to more adult food. Interestingly, the first event upon crossing the Jordan River was the celebration of Passover, exactly forty years after the Exodus. In a sense, the first Passover was a kind of weaning ceremony in which the people went from eating baby formula to more solid food.

Before they could celebrate Passover, however, the Israelite men had to be circumcised. The Torah says that the uncircumcised could not participate in eating of the Passover sacrifice. Throughout the years in the wilderness the boys were not circumcised in. Now, in one gigantic national ceremony every Israelite man was circumcised!

### **Joshua 5:8 -11**

“After the circumcising of the whole nation was completed, they remained where they were, in the camp, until they recovered. And the Lord said to Joshua: “Today I have rolled (*galoti*) away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” ...the Israelites offered the Passover sacrifice on the fourteenth of the month toward evening. On the day after Passover offering, on that very day, they ate the produce of the country, unleavened bread and parched grain.”

### **Joshua 3: 15 -16**

Now the Jordan keeps flowing over its entire bed throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the bearers of the ark reached the Jordan, the feet of the priests bearing the ark dipped into the water at its edge, the waters coming down from upstream piled up in a single heap a great way off...so the people crossed near Jericho.

### **Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary**

#### **Haftorah commentary by Dr. Michael Fishbane**

The nature of this disgrace - ended via circumcision – is unclear. Tradition reports that males were already circumcised in Egypt and those now circumcised were born after the Exodus (Joshua 5:5). Moreover extensive evidence (paintings, texts and mummified bodies) show that the ancient Egyptians also performed this operation, although in a different way from the Hebrews. Hence the “disgrace” mentioned here may be the disgrace of bondage.

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. What parallels are there between the first Passover and the Exodus, and the new Passover in the Land of Canaan? You may want to read through the opening chapters of the book of Joshua.
  2. What added significance was there to eating Matzah and parched grain now that the nation had entered the Promised Land?
  3. Note that in an earlier chapter in the book of Joshua, we learn that God split the Jordan River as the people entered the land? Why do you think he did this? What parallels and differences are there between the events that took place at the Jordan River and the Red Sea?
  4. What do you think the text is referring to when it speaks about removing “the disgrace of Egypt” by circumcising the Israelite men? Dr. Fishbane offers two interpretations – which one do you prefer? Can you come up with your own interpretation of this verse?
  5. Think of a significant Passover in your life. Describe it to a friend or a member of your family? What made it so significant? Did its significance grow out of the Seder itself or other things going on your life at the time?
- 

### **HELP SUPPORT TTT BY BECOMING A WEEKLY SPONSOR!!**

Torah Table Talk is a weekly e-publication of Rabbi Mark B Greenspan sponsored by the Oceanside Jewish Center on Long Island, New York. If you would like to subscribe to Torah Table Talk please send an e-mail to [Tabletalk@oceansidejc.org](mailto:Tabletalk@oceansidejc.org) or contact Rabbi Mark B Greenspan at [Haravmark@Optonline.net](mailto:Haravmark@Optonline.net). Readers are invited to sponsor a weekly edition of Torah Table Talk.

*“All it takes to study Torah is an open heart, a curious mind  
and a desire to grow a Jewish soul.”*