



ONE TORAH FOR ALL

One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
Exodus 12:49

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Understanding Torah Society

Part 24 – Keeping the Mo’edim as a Nation

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:16

“Three times in a year shall all your males appear before YHWH your Elohim in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before YHWH empty.”

It has been wrongly assumed by the masses that the observation of the appointed times set forth in Scripture by the nation of Israel is equivalent to the observation of the same appointed times by an individual. We will demonstrate from Scripture that this is not true. National observation of YHWH’s appointed times does nothing to fulfill that which an individual is commanded to do and observe and vice versa. So we will examine what the observation of the nation is supposed to be like in a Torah society as well as individual observation of the appointed times.

The divergence between national and individual observation of the appointed times is greatest in the mo’ed of Pesach. Therefore, it is here that we begin our examination.

Shemot (Exodus) 12:14

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to YHWH; throughout your generations you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.”

When YHWH gave Moshe instructions on how each person was to observe the first Pesach, three times¹ in Shemot chapter twelve, YHWH states that these instructions and the subsequent observation were to be kept forever throughout our generations; that is, from the first Pesach onward, this observation was to be done again and again every year at that time of the year per the instructions given through Moshe. Man has changed those instructions in

¹ see Shemot 12:14, 17, 24

favor of his own traditions, adding some of his own and taking away some of YHWH's instructions.

It is important to understand that the instructions of the first Pesach were to be perpetually observed. Some have argued, since there is no evidence in Scripture that Israel ever observed Pesach in this same manner again, this somehow negates the ordinances YHWH gave for the first Pesach. That is equivalent to stating that my neighbor's disobedience to a particular commandment releases me from having to keep it. How silly is that!? No person's or even national disobedience negates the commandment of YHWH! No matter how long standing a tradition may be, if that tradition negates a commandment of YHWH, then it is wrong!

Shemot chapter twelve has instructions from YHWH for each individual household to keep and observe Pesach. These instructions often get confused and then replaced with national observance, when both are commanded and should be observed. One of the main differences is that there are certain criteria which have to be met in order for the national observance of Pesach to be observed, as well as different ordinances than one finds regulating individual observation of Pesach.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:5-6

5 "You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates, which YHWH your Elohim gives you;

6 but at the place which YHWH your Elohim shall choose to cause His name to dwell in, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that you came forth out of Egypt."

If one is not very careful, the days upon which certain sacrifices are commanded to be done can get mixed up, and even thought to be the same thing when they are not. While the above passage is commonly pointed to in these days to show the sacrifices of Pesach should not be done just anywhere, it is not commonly understood what this context entails.

Please note the time of this sacrifice is specifically noted in the passage. The Pesach sacrifice referenced in this passage happens in the evening at sunset on the day which Israel came forth out of Egypt. What day did Israel leave Egypt? It was on Aviv fifteen.

Shemot (Exodus) 12:29

And it came to pass at midnight, that YHWH smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle."

To truly understand this timeline, one must keep in mind that the day begins and ends at sunset. The day of the month Israel set out from Egypt was on the fifteenth day of the month, specifically around midnight. This is prophetically significant as this is the time when Yeshua states He shall return for His bride in Matithyah 25:6. There is a direct correlation between

these two times. It is not within the scope of this study to deal with this here, but it is important to note its significance to show that the time of “midnight” is not simply incidental.

Shemot (Exodus) 12:5-6

5 “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old; you shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats;

6 and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at even.”

In giving the instructions on how each household was to keep and observe Pesach, YHWH states the lamb was to be slain upon the fourteenth of the month of Aviv. We point these things out to show the sacrifice mentioned in Devarim 16 is not the same sacrifice commanded in Shemot 12. If this is the case, and it is, then of what other sacrifices could the passage in Devarim 16 be speaking that are not to be done outside of the place where YHWH chooses for His name to dwell?

Please note and keep in mind as we proceed, that which is chosen from the flocks for the individual household is to be a lamb (sheep) or a kid (goat) as commanded in Shemot 12:5 quoted above.

B’midbar (Numbers) 28:17-24

17 And on the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast; seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten.

18 In the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no servile work;

19 but you shall offer an offering made by fire, a burnt-offering unto YHWH; two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven he-lambs a year old; they shall be unto you without blemish;

20 and their meal-offering, fine flour mingled with oil; three tenth parts shall you offer for a bullock, and two tenth parts for the ram;

21 a tenth part shall you offer for every lamb of the seven lambs;

22 and one he-goat for a sin-offering, to make atonement for you.

23 You shall offer these besides the burnt-offering of the morning, which is for a continual burnt-offering.

24 After this manner you shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of the offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto YHWH; it shall be offered besides the continual burnt-offering, and the drink-offering thereof.

This passage specifies that all the sacrifices commanded in this passage are to be done on the fifteenth of Aviv. There are different sacrifices to be done on the fourteenth of Aviv according to Shemot chapter 12. Those done on the fourteenth of Aviv are done by each household, each according to its size. However, those commanded in B’midbar 28 for Pesach are to be done for the whole nation on the fifteenth of Aviv. It is this list of sacrifices in B’midbar chapter 28 which we are specifically commanded not to do except in the place where His name dwells, Devarim is not forbidding the sacrifices done on the fourteenth of Aviv. We know this because of the

specific time stated in Devarim 16 as being on the day which Israel came out of bondage, specifically, on Aviv 15.

YHWH has given two sets of instructions for keeping Pesach. One set, the first set of commandments given, was for each individual household. This set is commanded by YHWH to be done every year throughout our generations. The second set is commanded by YHWH to be done only in the place where His name dwells. No such prohibition exists for the first set of commandments. The second set of commandments is for the nation as a whole. Only the nation may properly observe these sacrifices, which includes two bulls. There is no such sacrifice (bulls) for Pesach upon Aviv fourteen.

In a Torah society, both sets of instructions need to be properly observed. The individual families need to kill a lamb on the fourteenth of Aviv and eat it after sunset on the fifteenth (see Shemot 12 for a complete set of instructions). Then, the next day, on the fifteenth of Aviv at sunset (see Devarim 16:6 above), 24 hours later, all the sacrifices commanded in B'midbar 28:17-24 need to be done at that time. Israel is not that big and all the males could easily do both commanded parts of this feast.

Please understand that the sacrifices commanded to be done on Aviv 14 were originally done outside of the land without a mishkan (tabernacle) or a temple. Even more importantly, the killing and subsequent eating of these animals on Pesach were done without an altar. They were not sacrifices in the traditional sense, but rather, each household was commanded to kill and eat on this particular day. Conversely, on Aviv 15, the sacrifices commanded to be done on this day did involve the mishkan and then later the temple as well as the altar. These offerings were traditional sacrifices in every sense of the word. Hence, YHWH commanded these sacrifices were not to be done in the land except where His name would dwell. It is where His name dwells that the mishkan or temple resides, and the Ark of the Covenant, which is necessary for His name to dwell upon earth.

In a Torah society, it is important to be able to distinguish between a commandment which is directed towards each and every individual and those commandments which are directed towards Israel as a nation. The individual cannot properly observe a commandment given to the nation, nor does national observation of a commandment fulfill any commandment given to an individual.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:16-17

16 "Three times in a year shall all your males appear before YHWH your Elohim in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before YHWH empty;

17 every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of YHWH your Elohim which He has given you."

Five² times in the Torah Moshe, all the males are commanded to appear before YHWH three times each year, the seven days of unleavened bread, Shavuot, and Sukkot. However, these three feasts are not the only feasts which YHWH commands His people, Israel, to celebrate. Vayyiqra (Leviticus) chapter 23 gives a detailed list of all the commanded feasts. A similar list is also found in B'midbar (Numbers) chapters 28 and 29. The listing of the feasts in B'midbar has an additional feast which is not included in the list in Vayyiqra, Rosh Chodesh—the observation of the New Moon.

The difference between what YHWH expects all the males to do three times a year and what He expects all of Israel to do throughout the year is the difference between national observance of His commanded feasts and the commanded observance of individual families.

This is one of the main differences between the listing of the feasts between Vayyiqra and B'midbar. The listing in Vayyiqra is primarily a listing of feasts which each family is to observe and what to do in that observation to keep the feast to YHWH. Please note that all the specifics of how to keep the feast are not listed. The keeping of the feast may vary slightly from family to family as long as that which is commanded is observed.

The listing of the feasts in B'midbar is primarily a listing of national observance. In this listing all the sacrifices are detailed as to what offerings are to be offered on each day, including the daily sacrifice and the Shabbat sacrifice as well as each of the appointed days of YHWH. These sacrifices are to be given as a nation, not as individuals.

Another example is when first-fruits comes during the seven days of unleavened bread. It is individuals who go out and bring in the ripe barley for the wave offering. While there are individuals who do this, this wave offering is done as a national observance. This means that it is not expected by YHWH that each and every person in Israel go out and gather the barley.

Earlier in this study we examined the shemittah year, the year of release. This commandment, the whole nation is to observe. However, while there is a national observance of this event, the majority of commandments are directed towards individuals. It is one individual who releases the debt of another. If a person is a lien holder over another and he does not release the one who is indebted to him during the national observance of the year of release, then the national observance of the shemittah does nothing to fulfill the individual's responsibility to obey YHWH in this matter.

There are many such distinctions within the Torah Moshe. We must be careful to understand these distinctions in order to be able to properly obey the commandments. This, in turn, shall contribute to the people in the Torah society dwelling in harmony.

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

² This command is found in five verses or three passages – Shemot 23:14, 17; 34:23, 24; Devarim 16:16.

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