

Exodus 12:1-13

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ² This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall **be the first month of the year for you.** ³ Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴ If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷ They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰ You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the **PASSOVER OF THE LORD.** ¹² For I will **PASS THROUGH** the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Exodus 13:1-8

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ The Lord said to Moses: ² Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine. ³ Moses said to the people, "**Remember** this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, because the Lord brought you out from there by strength of hand; no leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴ Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. ⁵ When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this observance in this month. ⁶ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread,

This story of the Exodus...continues our reading of the Hebrew Scriptures – it's not just history, but their-story: the story that creates and identifies Israel. It's also our story through the teaching of Jesus that we read in Luke 22: a re-interpretation of the Passover to includes the Gentiles and Goyim that we are. How do you hear the institution of the Passover meal? How do you see it reflected, remembered and reinterpreted in our sharing of the communion bread and cup?

Egypt :: מִצְרַיִם [Mitzráyim]. The root word of Mitzrayim, according to is mem (מ) /tzadi (צ) /resh (ר), metzeir, meaning to border, to shut or to limit. Other sources claim the etymology of the word Mitzrayim lies intzar, either or the verb, means to bind, tie up, be restricted, narrow, scant, or cramped, while , a noun, means straits, or distress, and as an adjective means narrow, or tight. All commentators agree that Mitzrayim, the word, represents hardship, distress, oppression, a narrow place or straits etc. The prefix mem [מ] can modify the meaning of a root word and thus create a noun with the meaning "the place of..." Using this morphology, Mitzrayim, based upon the root or , means the place of restriction, a cramped and narrow place etc.

Mi-Mitzrayim (from/out of Mitzrayim) ... "In each and every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Mitzrayim" (Pesachim 10:5). Emerging (from/out of) hardship and bondage, from the place of [the prefix,], i.e. narrowness, bondage or restriction, and of straits or distress, creates the phrase mi-Mitzrayim (from Mitzrayim) a word that in essence encapsulates and precipitates the Story of Redemption. The word Mitzrayim thus represents an enduring "spiritual" association with Israel's redemptive experience. Mitzrayim thus becomes both the symbol and the experience of captivity, of being caught/bound in narrow place(s), and our symbol of deliverance, both of which are captured so beautifully in Psalm 34:7,

be the first month of the year for you : The text doesn't quite make sense as New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah) occurs on the first and second days of the lunar month of Tishri [September-October]. Whereas Passover commences on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Nisan [March-April] and lasts for either seven days. There is also Genesis 8:13 which says that the first day of the first month is to the day that Noah and his family left the ark for dry land. How do we understand such contradictions and seeming errancy of scripture? The best way to understand this textual conflict is in that this decree of God is an innovation: a transformation of how the Israelites are to see time and history.

and on the seventh day there shall be a festival to the Lord.
⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen in your possession, and no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory. ⁸ **You shall tell your child** on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'

Luke 22:14-22

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁴ When **the hour** came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat **THIS PASSEVER** with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled **in the kingdom of God**." ¹⁷ Then he took a **cup**, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until **the kingdom of God** comes." ¹⁹ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And he did the same with the **cup** after supper, saying, "This **cup** that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹ But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. ²² For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" ²³ Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this.

QUESTIONS FOR EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

AS WE SEE IN THESES FOUNDATIONAL TEXTS BOTH THE PASSEVER AND COMMUNION ARE FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE NOTIONS OF DELIVERANCE BY GOD'S INTERVENTION IN HISTORY. HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE? WHEN? WHERE? HOW DID YOU RECOGNIZE IT? (DURING? AFTER? NOW?)

THESE IDENTITY-GIVING AND LIFE-AFFIRMING MEALS ARE MORE THAN RITUALS, THEY ARE COMMUNITY ACTIONS THAT REORIENT US FROM THE PAST TOWARD THE FUTURE, EMPOWER US TO REINTERPRET THE PRESENT, TO REMEMBER GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO DISCERN IT TODAY. HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THAT ACTIVE AND DIRECTIVE DISCERNMENT IN SHARING COMMUNION?

HOW HAVE YOU, OR MAYBE WE, LET THIS MEAL OF DEEP TRANSFORMATION, RADICAL HOPE AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT BECOME AN ACTION THAT IS EMPTY, A GESTURE THAT BECOMES MORE ABOUT US THAN ABOUT WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE WORLD?

PASSEVER :: Passover or "Pesach" from the Hebrew word פֶּסַח [*Pesah*]. The etymology (meaning) of the word is disputed, with hypotheses divided whether to connect it a word meaning 'limp, dance with limping motions.' It's a noun that refers to the lamb to be slaughtered, as well as the holiday. It's also a verb which first occurs here (Genesis 12:23) in the Hebrew Scriptures in reference to God "passing over" (or "skipping") the houses of the Hebrews during the final of the Ten Plagues of Egypt. Scholars say a more faithful translation may be "he hovered over, guarding" as the image invoked by the verb in Isaiah 31:5: "As birds hovering, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem; He will deliver it as He protecteth it, He will rescue it as He passeth over" Here the word means both to pass over and to hover, guard the marked doors. Symbolically the word *pesah* evokes a passage, a change, a threshold to be crossed or protected.

Remember :: in Hebrew זָכַר [*zakar*] meaning to remember; but less as a nostalgic or melancholic memory. It's a active verb a re-membling, a looking forward or to today's context by first looking back to the past to invoke, recall and be reminded of God's faithfulness and power in the past.

which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery... a land flowing with milk and honey :: notice the stark contrast, evocation to freedom, liberty, life and abundance.

You shall tell your child :: This decree is part of the Haggadah (the prayer book for celebrating the Passover, still used today) as well as present in one of the versions of the 10 Commandments regarding keeping the sabbath "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day." Deuteronomy 5:15

the hour :: This refers to the "passion" as we see in Luke 22:14 (the only other time the expression is used in Luke) which marks the beginning of his passion journey. It's used repeatedly throughout John's gospel with this meaning.

Cup :: in the Hebrew Scriptures a "cup" is used as the symbol of Divine Judgment (see it in Ezekiel 23:31-34; Jeremiah 25:15 & 16:27-38)

Jesus takes the religious ritual of Passover in which the Hebrews find their identity and re-interperts and re-orientes it with a prophetic gesture. It's not just the past, but the present and future, not just for Jews, but all who drink of the cup and eat of the bread.