

# OIM UPDATE

April 2016

This month, as we welcome in the first of Nisan (Aviv) on the Hebrew calendar, the Northern Hemisphere enjoys the annual renaissance of new life to dormant vegetation. These green shoots on lawns, bluebonnets (in Texas) along the thoroughfares, and budding trees, are visible reminders of the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah—who has been recognized by His followers as the Passover Lamb of God (John 1:29), slain from the foundation of the world (1 Peter 18-19). In most years, the common Christian remembrance of Jesus' resurrection, improperly known as "Easter," usually occurs relatively close to the commemoration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, due to calendar changes down through the millennia, there are years when Passover and Easter have a month of difference. Such is the case in 2016.

The Jewish community and most Messianic followers of Yeshua will commemorate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread this month around the week of April 22-30. As I pondered these distinctions, I was prompted to write this month's article, entitled "**A Perpetual Passover**," because of how meaningful the annual *seder* meal has become to our family. After all, when we did our research on the First Century followers of the Messiah, it was obvious that His Apostles continued to follow the commands of the Torah regarding the annual remembrance of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The following passage in the Book of Acts makes it abundantly clear that the leaders of the "Way" (Acts 19:9, 23) did not deviate from the instruction of Moses, as Passover and Unleavened Bread were a deeply rooted part of their faith experience:

"Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the [assembly] in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. **Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.** So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the [assembly] to God" (Acts 12:1-5).

Because we believe that in this hour, the Holy One of Israel is in the midst of fulfilling many of the end-time prophecies which proclaim an ultimate restoration of His children to His ways, it is critical that this witness to the Jewish and Christian communities continues. Passover *seder* celebrations, by Jewish and non-Jewish followers of the Messiah, are being used to provoke Jews to jealousy for Messiah faith *and* demonstrate to the Christian world that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God two millennia ago was a part of God's plan to deliver humanity from the bondage of sin. When conveyed eloquently, the connections between Israel's deliverance in the original Passover from slavery in Egypt, *and* the deliverance every person needs from their bondage to the powers of sin, are profound.

We strongly encourage all modern-day followers of Yeshua to commemorate the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, both at home with their fami-

lies, as well as with their local Messianic congregation or fellowship. Our lengthy publication, the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*, is an important guide and resource which compiles much of what you can expect to do, during this season, from what we have experienced over the years. In addition, I have written a devotional book entitled, *Counting the Omer*, designed to help people prepare their hearts for the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*, fifty days from the Passover celebrations.

Finally, your support of our mission is greatly appreciated, as we have established the **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Prison Ministry Free Book Fund** to write and disseminate our materials to those seeking balanced, scholarly, and loving perspectives on what the Holy Scriptures describe is happening in this hour of restoration. Thank you for your prayers and financial partnership in our efforts to produce sound teaching that we believe, in His time, will be critical for the emergence of the “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15) our Heavenly Father is bringing together!

*“May the LORD bless you, and keep you; may the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).*

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...  
Mark Huey

# A PERPETUAL PASSOVER

by Mark Huey

For over twenty years, our family has had the blessed opportunity to commemorate the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread at home and various Messianic community *seders*. We have enjoyed these annual convocations, even though much of evangelical Christianity is widely and broadly separated from its Hebraic and Jewish Roots. Once we became immersed in a Messianic Jewish setting in 1996, our understanding about the appointed times or the *moedim* (מוֹעֲדִים) changed. As Bible students with a passion for history, when we studied the Bible and did our historical research, we came to the conclusion that the God of Israel never terminated His commands for His people to remember His appointed times in perpetuity. The Jewish people have faithfully been remembering the Leviticus 23 appointed times down through the millennia, but each of these distinct Biblical holidays bear importance for **all who serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. Over the past two decades, these revelations, among others, have dramatically altered yet substantially enriched our walk with Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

In recalling our spiritual journey, the transition to a Messianic lifestyle did not occur instantaneously, but instead, took some time, as a number of previous Biblical understandings had to be transformed through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). I vividly remember that one of the first challenges to our previous thinking about God's appointed times came when I was confronted with this passage from Exodus, where the Hebrew word *olam* (עוֹלָם) was impossible to ignore. After the Ancient Israelites had been delivered from Egypt, the Lord commanded a weekly Sabbath rest on the seventh day of the week. Clearly it was to be a perpetual or everlasting covenant, which would be a unique sign to the larger world:

“For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. **So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever;** for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:15-17).

For whatever reasons, as my mind was being challenged, I can remember meditating upon the concepts of “**perpetual**” and “**forever**” for some time, until I finally came to the realization that God meant what He said. But the awareness that I was not necessarily obeying this command, convicted me of my disregard for this basic instruction. So for days, I pleaded with the Holy Spirit for answers to many questions. I implored Him for clarification about what “**perpetual**” and “**forever**” actually meant, and if and how it applied to me and our family.

This pursuit of the truth shook up my thinking, because for years I had

firmly believed and understood from other passages in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament that I had been adopted into the family of God, and was considered a child of God and fellow heir with the Messiah of Israel:

“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ **The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah**, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*” (Romans 8:15-17).

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Messiah, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. **In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua the Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will**, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:3-6).

After my salvation experience, there has never been any doubt that I am a child of God, born from above, and a Spirit-filled follower of the Messiah of Israel. As I recalled previously memorized Scriptures and reviewed the Apostolic Writings, I eventually came to this passage from 1 John, which started to reveal more and more about what it actually meant to be a child of the Most High. Here in elementary terms, the beloved apostle simply states how “true” love of the Father is exemplified by keeping His commandments:

“Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, **when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.** For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:1-5).

Did the Apostle state in this passage that those born of God could overcome the world by simply faith and belief in Yeshua the Son of God? Or is there not more to be found in the context of his last statement?

Without reservation, I queried the Helper (Holy Spirit) in my heart to teach me what I needed to know (John 14:26). After all, I was conflicted by John’s declarations. For years, I had been taught innumerable times throughout my Christian life that Jesus had reduced the Old Testament laws into a relatively simple formula for obedience to the commandments of God. In answering a question meant to test him by a doubting lawyer, Yeshua quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, indicating that these two commandments composed the entire Law given by Moses:

“One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND [Deuteronomy 6:4].’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [Leviticus 19:18].’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

Time and again various Christian Bible teachers I had encountered had used this passage to deal with a Believer’s responsibility to obey the commands of God. As I now recall, this teaching was a relatively simple answer to a much more profound issue. After all, it is very easy for someone to state that he or she loves the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbor as themselves. I even had these verses memorized when confronted with questions about the Law of Moses. It was a trite answer which satisfied me and many others, who were or are simply depending on their “faith and belief” in Jesus to overcome the world—despite considerable ignorance about the wealth of instructions found in the Old Testament, the first two-thirds of the Bible. *But I was only fooling myself*. For years, I had, most unfortunately, very little comprehension about what the foundational building blocks of my faith truly entailed, until I began studying the whole counsel of God.

In much of my past Christian experience, I had not assiduously studied the Law of Moses and understood what God truly meant when He spoke about loving Him. I had not really considered the declarations of the Prophets, which reveal what the consequences of disobedience could actually be. Questions arose in my heart. How can people unaware of what God has stated in His Word in fact say that they love the Lord and their neighbor, if they have very little knowledge of what He has said? **Loving God and neighbor requires more than lip service**. It requires demonstrable actions which actually reveal that a person truly understands who God is and why He has revealed Himself to humanity through the entire breath of Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

A blatant oversight and lack of basic knowledge about God and His ways—and what He expects of His children—remind me of some poignant words issued by James the Just, when it comes to the subject of faith without works being dead or useless:

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. But someone may *well* say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?**” (James 2:14-20).

Here in this convicting passage, James references a principle found in the

Book of Deuteronomy that exemplifies what it truly means to love your neighbor:

“If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, **you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks**” (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

This is one of many places where a fuller understanding of what God requires for one to extend love to a neighbor is cited. And so, if the Torah or Moses’ Teaching has been completely abolished—as is incorrectly taught by many—then the concept of loving one’s neighbor might often be reduced to a simple thought, rather than be frequently manifest in concrete actions which confirm that true saving faith exists.

So why does our family remember the weekly Sabbath, and the other appointed times commanded by the Holy One of Israel? Why do we annually remember the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? The answer is very straightforward. We remember these institutions of the Lord, because He has said that they are permanent:

“**Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.** Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and *another* holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you. You shall also observe the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; **therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance.** In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he* is an alien or a native of the land. You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread” (Exodus 12:14-20).

Obviously, the Lord wanted His people to remember their deliverance from bondage to slavery in all of their succeeding generations, *forever*. While it has historically been the Jewish people who have faithfully remembered the Passover for the past two to three millennia, the Passover has a message which needs to be heeded by *all who serve the God of Israel*. To be severed from the message and themes of the Passover, the lamb to be sacrificed, the plagues upon the Egyptians, and the parting of the Red Sea—is to be cut off from the major events which depict the salvation work of Yeshua of Nazareth. Thankfully, in increasing numbers today—just as the Lord has brought many Jewish people to their Messiah Yeshua—many non-Jewish Believers are being brought into an appreciation and an embrace of the Passover, and all of the appointed times.

Many of us are of the conviction that this is all a part of the prophesied “restoration of all things” that the ancient Prophets declared, as noted in this passage from the Acts 3:

“But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Yeshua, the Messiah appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until *the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time*” (Acts 3:18-21).

In order to come to understand that the appointed times of the Lord bear significance for each one of us as born again Believers, requires sincere study, and ultimately both instruction and revelation by the Helper/Comforter/Teacher. The Holy Spirit is to teach us all things:

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26).

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).

Unfortunately, because various ecclesiastical and religious powers have controlled much of Christian thought in a way so as to distance it too much from the Tanakh or Old Testament, various strongholds are not easily overcome. Bad teaching begets misinformed students and followers. Maintaining a rigid distinction and separation between the Jewish people and Judaism, and Christianity, has always been part of the Adversary’s plan to keep God’s people divided. But by the testimony of countless people around the world, many are being led to return to the ancient paths of our faith (Jeremiah 6:16)—which definitely includes celebrating the Feasts of the Lord!

Our family is a classic example of those who have been simply reading the Scriptures, and asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about what we are to do, as we are being conformed to the image of the Messiah (Romans 8:29). Yeshua the Messiah obviously participated in the Passover, and He even led a unique Passover *seder* before His trial and execution. So if Yeshua remembered the Passover, should we not as His followers continue in His example of obedience? Here is a basic principle that all followers of the Messiah should understand, *if* they truly want to be like their Teacher:

**“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).**

In addition, a straightforward reading of the Book of Acts indicates that the First Century Apostles and their followers certainly maintained fidelity to the

Torah or Moses' Teaching. They understood that remembrances like the Passover were not to cease, as they would instead be critical to understand on deeper levels, per the arrival of the Messiah and His sacrifice for human transgressions. The adherence to be a testimony to others continued, despite the intensified persecutions by the authorities after Yeshua had risen from the dead:

“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the [assembly] in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. **Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.** So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the [assembly] to God” (Acts 12:1-5).

This is one among various testimonies found throughout the Book of Acts that **the First Century followers of the Messiah understood and observed the Torah.** To disregard basic instructions, which include perpetually honoring the appointed times or *moedim*, would have indicated a lack of love for the Holy One of Israel and His commands. With the formal emergence of Roman Catholicism in the Third to Fourth Centuries C.E., formal steps were taken by ecclesiastical authorities to condemn as heretics any Christian person who sought to keep Torah instructions such as the seventh-day Sabbath or Passover. However, with the Protestant Reformation, and a return to the written Scriptures as the prime authority for faith—but most especially in the past fifty years or so with the emergence of the Messianic movement, a restoration to the ancient paths has grown exponentially in terms of people returning to what the First Century Believers did.

Three questions modern-day followers of the Messiah must ask include:

- Do we want to follow in the footsteps of Yeshua the Messiah and truly do what He did?
- Do we want to do what the First Century disciples did regarding the appointed times of the Lord?
- Are we a generation which will make an effort to obey the commands of the Lord, regardless of the detractors?

There was a generation led by Joshua, which followed the leadership of Moses, and finally arrived in the Promised Land. Joshua understood the temptation to return to the comfort of serving the former gods of Egypt, which were still present in his generation. His challenge to those gathered was,

**“Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (Joshua 24:14-15).

Joshua's question to his generation about who they would choose to serve,



most certainly applies to Messiah followers today. If we truly love the Holy One of Israel with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and strength—will we choose to obey His commands regarding the perpetuity of the Passover? In the future, in the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John gives followers of the Messiah a unique perspective of why it is important to understand the connection between the ancient deliverance from Egypt and the blood of the Lamb of God. The beloved Apostle specifically witnessed how the end-times saints will be those who have a testimony of Yeshua and obey His commands (Revelation 12:17; 14:12). As the end of the age approaches, consider this future scene to transpire:

**“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.’ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘My lord, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes”** (Revelation 7:9-17).

In this vision of the throne of God, John reveals that God’s worshippers will be from every nation, tribe, people group, and tongue. I am confident that many of these will have indeed remembered the ordinances of the Lord, including the Passover, and that they will have had an intimate knowledge of the Passover Lamb Himself.

As a family which loves and serves the Lord, we concluded years ago that the Passover being designated as **“perpetual,”** requires that we pay attention to it and observe it. **We understand that our obedience to remember the Passover is a significant part of doing what Yeshua did.** *For us, the Passover is an important time every year when we remember the salvation of our God.* We are of the firm conviction that all followers of the Messiah should remember Israel’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt—with the much more significant realization that the blood of the Passover Lamb, Yeshua, provides permanent and final atonement for our sin!

Hallelujah! *Chag Samaech!*

# MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS UPDATE

April 2016

Dear Friends:

It was around twenty years ago in 1996, that my family made a collective break from evangelical Christianity, to commit itself full time to attending a Messianic Jewish congregation and begin embracing a lifestyle of Torah obedience. We had been steadily drawn into the Messianic movement during the Fall high holidays

of 1995, with me being one of the last to consider it. After a Spring Break roadtrip in 1996, and receiving some personal convictions from the Lord that the Messianic movement was indeed about *more* than just Jewish evangelism, we began to commit ourselves fully. We no longer attended both *Shabbat* services and Sunday church, but just *Shabbat* services. We already knew the importance of the Messiah's prophetic fulfillment of the *moedim* or appointed times, but we would now be committed to them as true annual commemorations. And, we certainly had a wide number of unclean things to see eliminated from our refrigerator.

Several months later, as the Summer loomed, our family was also presented with some compelling teachings about the end-times, and with it the possibility that some significant events might soon be on the horizon. Of course, we know now in 2016 that the Great Tribulation certainly did not start in the late 1990s. What we do know is that since the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the Messianic movement has mushroomed with many non-Jewish Believers, similar to my own family, entering in. Many of them have come alongside of their fellow Jewish Believers, as we have, and sought to consider what both groups have to contribute to one another in an environment of mutual honor and blessing.

Over the past thirteen years since 2003, I have been involved in full time Messianic ministry. The selection of my writings, for sure, indicates that I have been a very busy person. I could stop writing books and commentaries right now, as what I have written already composes what many people in Christian academia would write in their lifetime. That I am committed to helping Messianic people find answers to their questions, is quite obvious. I anticipate writing much, much more, on a diverse array of issues which will doubtlessly be necessary for the days to come.

Perhaps it is because our family has been involved in Messianic things for twenty years, that I raise the issue of *how much longer we have* until the Messiah's return. I am not proposing any timetable here. But what if we knew that we only had twenty or twenty-five or thirty years before the Second Coming. That would be a few decades for sure, but they would be decades in which our religious freedoms in the West would be steadily curtailed, in which the Bible would be significantly ridiculed, in which many Christian leaders would definitely abandon Scriptural truth, and in which **each of us would need to tactfully consider what we wanted to do with our lives.** *We would not be able to do everything that our predecessors were able to do.* We would have to choose to purposefully give up planned careers, we might not get that additional degree, we might not have spouses or children, and most especially we might have to decide what ventures for the Kingdom of God require the bulk of our time and attention.

I personally believe that today in 2016, that the walls have begun to slowly close in. ***I certainly have much to do.*** Almost every weekday I post a YouTube video podcast from my office, I work on the ongoing Wednesday Night Bible Study (either notes or written commentary), and I work on another project (such as *Salvation on the Line* for right now). I can easily have a fourteen hour day. I believe that over the next two decades, that many more individuals and families—like mine did in 1996—are going to be entering into the Messianic movement. I want them to avoid some of the mistakes and pitfalls that we made, and be put on a much faster and more stable track. I do not want to be found misusing my time and energies, because indeed we have less time in front of us than we do behind us.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee

