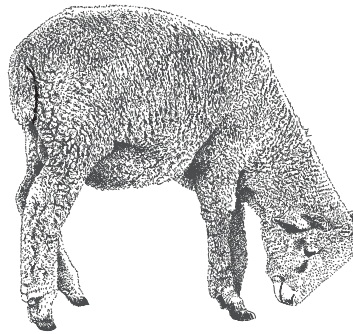




April 2014

Passover Eve:
Mon. April 14, 2014



Dear Partners in Covenant,

Covenant Remembered

Every year at this time our hearts focus on the Passover, a joyous celebration of our physical and spiritual deliverance. We lift up Messiah, our Passover, who was sacrificed for us, fulfilling prophecies such as Isaiah 53, which speak of a lamb that would be slain for the forgiveness of sin. This year, we want to put Passover in a broader biblical context. The Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12, did not happen in a vacuum. It was the culmination of covenants given in love and steeped in blood. These covenants were unilaterally made by a God whose overwhelming desire is to have an intimate relationship with His creation—with YOU, with US!

"So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them." (Ex. 2:24-25) The children of Israel had been slaves for over 300 years. The Bible tells us that God heard their cry and "remembered" them. Had He forgotten them? No. The word remembered in this biblical context means that God was ready to act. His action would be based on covenant love. It was the set time to act upon the covenant that God had made with Abraham and his descendants.

Covenant Defined

The word for covenant in Hebrew is *b'rit* ברית (pronounced b'reet). It appears over 270 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and 33 times in the *B'rit Hadasha* (the New Covenant). The Bible is, in fact, a covenant document. The "Old and New Testaments" are both covenants.

A covenant is a pact or treaty, a sacred bond, a legally binding agreement between two or more people, or a solemn promise made by God. The God of the Israelites was unique among the gods of all other nations. He was the only One who initiated covenants with His people. Some were conditional, in which man had to fulfill conditions in order to receive the benefits or blessings of the covenant. "If you do...I will do..." Others were unconditional and included a sovereign act of God in which He obligated Himself to do something regardless of man's response. In an unconditional covenant, God keeps His part, even when man does not. Good news for us: Our God is a Covenant-Keeping God, and His covenants are unbreakable.

While Bible scholars are divided on the question of how many covenants the Bible contains, most would agree on the following: Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3:14-19), Noahic Covenant (Gen. 8:21-9:17, 24-27), Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19:5-8, 20:1-31:18), Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:12-16), and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8:6-13). The Adamic and Noahic Covenants were made with humanity in general, while the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenant were made with the nation of Israel. The only conditional covenant in this list is the Mosaic Covenant. The others made with the nation of Israel are eternal as well as unconditional, and do not depend on Israel's obedience, but rather on God's faithfulness. The covenants build upon one another; they are God's way of interacting with His people. In referring to his brethren, the Jewish people, the Apostle Paul made the following observation: "...who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises..." (Rom. 9:4).

Covenants and Blood

The shedding of blood was an integral part of making a covenant. In fact, covenants were not "made;" they were "cut." The term used to express the action of making a covenant is *karat b'rit*, which literally means "to cut a covenant." While the first use of this phrase is found in Genesis 15:18 as God made a covenant with Abraham, the shedding of blood through sacrifice was foreshadowed in the Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3:15, Gen. 3:21), and the blood of ritual sacrifice accompanied the Noahic Covenant (Gen. 8:20), before the Lord imparted the sign (*ot ha-b'rit*) of the Covenant, the rainbow (Gen. 9:13).

Karat b'rit implied the shedding of blood, the principal carrier of life for the body, in the process of ratifying the agreement (Lev. 17:11). The shedding of blood as part of covenant-making shows the seriousness and level of commitment involved. Covenants in biblical times were often sealed by cutting a sacrificial animal into two parts, between which the contracting parties passed, showing that they were bound to each other in unbreakable bonds. Jeremiah 34:18, 20 is an example of this. God is angry with His people for having disobeyed Him in the matter of enslaving their brethren: *"And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—" "I will give them into the hand of their enemies..."* The covenant partners, who passed through the animal sacrifice, were in effect saying, "May this be done to me if I do not keep this covenant."

Abrahamic Covenant

An amazing example of this *B'rit bein HaBetarim*, or Covenant Between the Parts, is the covenant that God made with His friend Abraham. We read in Genesis 15 that Abram cut a heifer, a female goat and a ram in two as directed by the Lord. *"Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram..."* (Gen. 15:12) While Abram slept, God made a unilateral, unconditional, eternal covenant with him: *"...behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces"* (Gen. 15:17). God walked between the pieces without Abraham, even though the covenant He made was with Abraham, representing the Jewish nation present and future. *"On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—'."* (Gen. 15:18)

The Abrahamic Covenant is the foundational covenant of all future covenants that God made with Israel. In this covenant the Lord makes eternal promises concerning a Land, a Seed and a Blessing. There are thirteen provisions or promises included in the Abrahamic Covenant. Six passages of Scripture detail them: Gen. 2:1-3, Gen. 12:7, Gen. 13:14-17, Gen. 15:1-21, Gen. 17:1-21, and Gen. 22:15-18. All other covenants build upon this special covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed through his son Isaac, then through Jacob, and through Jacob to all the Jewish people. *"O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones! He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant..."* (Ps. 105:6-10) God was entering into a special relationship with Abraham and his descendants for all time. The blood that would be shed *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation, as a sign of this covenant, would be the rite of circumcision, known as *b'rit milah* in Hebrew.

God promised that Abraham's seed would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. The Gentiles were included in this blessing. And, indeed, all nations have been blessed through Abraham, since the Messiah came forth from his seed (Matt. 1:1). The Abrahamic Covenant also expanded upon the Adamic and Noahic Covenants. The seed that will defeat the serpent (Gen 3:15) would come through Abraham. The nations, *B'nai Noach*, that were born from Noah after the flood, would all be blessed through Abraham as well.

The Abrahamic Covenant is still in effect today. It is intimately involved with the Messiah Yeshua. Abraham may have even had knowledge of God's future covenants. Yeshua said, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad"* (John 8:56). Abraham was destined to become not only the father of all physical Jews, but the father of a spiritual seed, non-Jewish believers in the Messiah Yeshua, who follow Abraham's example of faith.

The purposes of God for Israel are not done away with simply because there is a non-Jewish spiritual seed of Abraham. Remember, the covenant is unconditional and eternal! Israel is still beloved for the sake of the *"fathers"* (Rom. 11:28). Israel is still called "elect." Gentile believers have not replaced Israel, but rather joined her. (See Romans 11:16-21.) They are children of Abraham through faith in the Jewish Messiah Yeshua. Just like Abraham, they believe "without circumcision." (Note: Abraham was justified by faith [Gen. 15] years before he received circumcision as a sign of the covenant [Gen. 17]).

We love how a covenantal truth was expressed in an article in **The Master's Seminary Journal**: "When God enters into a unilateral covenant guaranteed only by His own faithfulness; when God enters into a covenant void of any human requirements to keep it in force; when God establishes a covenant that will continue as long as there is day and night and summer and winter, then great care must be taken not to erect man-made limitations that would bankrupt the heart and soul of these covenants and annual the glorious full realization of all that He promised through them."

Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant, made between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai, is the only "conditional" covenant that the Almighty made with the Children of Israel. It includes an "if" clause, *"...If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"* (Ex. 19:5-6). This covenant included hundreds of commandments, with blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The Mosaic Covenant is ratified in Exodus 24 where all Israel declares, *"...All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient."* (vs. 7). *"And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.'"* (Ex. 24:8)

Unfortunately, Israel did not keep her part of the Covenant. God's justice demanded that Israel suffer the penalty of disobedience (the curses), but His covenantal nature compelled Him to find a way to supernaturally empower His people to be covenant-keepers. The B'rit Hadasha and the circumcision of the heart would be His answer! (See Deut. 30:6.) In the meantime, God remained Faithful: *"...I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD"* (Lev. 26:44-45).

Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant builds upon all the preceding covenants. God said, *"I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations' "* (Ps. 89:3-4). This covenant is unconditional and eternal. Inherent in the Davidic Covenant is the solution to Israel's inability to keep the Law. The Messiah, the Son of David, would be the One who would culminate and terminate all the blood sacrifices for sin that were an integral part of the Mosaic Covenant. He is the Seed promised to David, whose kingdom would be an everlasting kingdom. The Messiah would usher in a covenant that would change the heart of man. The law of God would move from the outside, on tablets of stone, to the inside, on the human heart.

New Covenant

At His last Passover with His disciples, Yeshua took the cup after supper, the Cup of Redemption, gave thanks and said, *"...this is My blood of the new covenant (b'rit hadasha), which*

is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28). Just like Abraham, Yeshua entered this covenant alone. We were asleep (dead in our sin). He sealed the covenant in His own blood when He died on the tree, becoming that blessing to all mankind that God promised to Abraham.

The New Covenant is unconditional and eternal. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this covenant when Israel was about to go into exile in Babylon: *"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** (karat, "cut" in Hebrew) 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"* (Jer. 31:31-34).

The Lord continues with promises of "knowing Him" (*yadah* in Hebrew—an intimate "knowing"), and forgiveness (removal rather than just covering) of sin. All these promises, and much more, are part of the New Covenant initiated by the sacrificial "cutting" of the Messiah Yeshua. This covenant is truly "new" because the law of God is written on man's heart through the Ruach HaKadosh, whose indwelling presence creates a powerful, eternal bond between the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and a believer. A circumcised heart is the sign of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant was promised to Israel, not to the Gentiles. Are the blessings of salvation to only be for the Jews? NO! The Abrahamic Covenant guarantees spiritual blessings to Gentiles as well, and the New Covenant amplifies this concept of blessings. The Gentiles, according to Ephesians 2, called the "uncircumcised" (note: no blood), were *"...without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."* BUT NOW, in Yeshua, the *"Mediator of the New Covenant,"* Gentiles who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah (Eph. 2:11-13).

The blood of Yeshua's sacrifice is powerful to save, bless and keep Jews and Gentiles alike!
"...For indeed Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." (1 Cor. 5:7)

Passover blessings in Yeshua, our Passover Lamb!

Neil & Jamie

P.S. Consider purchasing **The Covenant** DVD for sale this month. It is absolutely spectacular! A real gem! A must see!

Jewish Jewels Television Airtime Schedule - April 2014

LOCAL TV STATIONS

<u>AIRTIME:</u>	<u>STATE:</u>	<u>CITY:</u>	<u>STATIONS:</u>
TUE 6:00 PM	AK	North Pole	KJNP TV 4
MON 10:00 PM	FL	Tampa/St. Pete.	WCLF TV 22
THU 11:30 AM	FL	Miami/Ft. Laud.	WHFT TV 45
SUN 1:30 PM	FL	Tallahassee	WVUP TV 45
SAT 10:30 PM	FL	West Palm Beach	WFGC TV 61
SUN 2:30 PM	GA	Columbus	WYBU TV 16
SUN 1:30 PM	IA	Dubuque	KFXB TV 40
THU 6:30 AM	ID	Twin Falls	KJCY TV 38
SUN 1:30 PM	MO	New Bloomfield	KNLJ TV 25
THU 8:30 AM	NC	Goldsboro	WHFL TV 43
SUN 4:00 PM	NJ/NY	NYC/New Jersey	WMBC TV 63
THU 5:30 AM	OR	The Dalles	KRHP TV 14

SATELLITE NETWORKS (EST)

DirecTV

SUN 4:00 PM Ch. 93 or 900 - WMBC
FRI 8:30 PM Ch. 376 - CTN (Christian Television Network)
 MON 11:30 PM Ch. 371 - Church Channel

Dish Network

FRI 8:30 PM Ch. 376 - CTN (Christian Television Network)
 MON 11:30 PM Ch. 258 - Church Channel



CABLE NETWORKS (EST)

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