

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

March/April 1997

Israel's Passover

Editors' Journal

"Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season."—Numbers 9:2

No feast has more significance than the ancient Passover rites of Israel. The feast has kept alive in Jewish minds not only the deliverance from Egypt in days of old but the ever-present reality that their God has been with them and will ultimately deliver them at the precise hour he has determined.

In Old Testament times, this favored nation of God slipped into the practices of idolatry again and again. Yet, repetitively, once they turned their hearts to him, Jehovah would deliver his people.

During their captivity in Babylon in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, their situation looked hopeless. But again, after a period of punishment "to fulfill threescore and ten years" (2 Chron. 36:21), God raised up Cyrus, king of Persia, who issued a decree that the Jews could not only return to their native land but could build a temple there (Ezra 1:1, 2).

Still a longer diaspora faced them after their two defeats by Rome in A.D. 70 and 135. For nearly two thousand years they wandered from country to country. Yet, in the last 120 years we have seen the Jewish people return to their homeland from all the nations of the earth. The horrors of the Holocaust did not stop but rather accelerated the return. The united efforts of their Arab neighbors failed to prevent the modern exodus to Israel.

A Deeper Meaning

For the Christian this holiday has a deeper meaning. On the eve of the Passover in the year A.D. 33 Jesus of Nazareth partook of his "last supper" on the last day of his earthly life (Luke 22:1). When the meal was finished he introduced a new ceremony as the antitype of the Jewish Passover by bringing forth the emblems of bread and wine,

introducing them as pictures of his flesh and his blood. The Apostle Paul zeroed in on the meaning of this ceremony to the Christians with the simple statement, "Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Many Christians celebrate this event annually, participating in ceremonial bread and wine, not only to remind them of the great sacrifice culminated at Calvary but also of their invitation to be co-participants with Christ. "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16 NAS).

This issue of **THE HERALD** takes a closer look at the various details in the original passover ceremony, as ordained by God, and draws lessons from them for the Christian life.

The central theme of Israel's Passover was the slaying of a lamb, sprinkling its blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses, and then partaking of its flesh and bitter herbs. The article, Behold The Lamb of God, examines the symbolism of these events in depth.

Another feature of the Passover was the removing of all leaven from the houses of the Israelites and the preparation of unleavened bread for the feast. These issues are treated in two articles entitled Cleaning House and A Little Leaven.

With Staff in Hand takes a closer look at the haste with which Israel was to eat the original supper and the other preparations that they were to make to demonstrate their faith actually being delivered from Egyptian bondage that night.

Although only the firstborn children of Israel were passed over by the death angel, a larger passing would occur. The fleeing nation was delivered from the pursuing Egyptians by "passing over" a sea of reeds on dry ground. The account of this is found in Exodus 14 and is investigated in the verse by verse Bible study entitled, God Divideth the Sea.

So important was this ceremony, God changed the entire structure of the Hebrew year. The deliverance occurred in what would be normally considered the beginning of the seventh month of their year. Subsequently this month would be considered the first month of a religious year. The significance of this is called to our attention in the "Echoes from the Past," The Beginning of Months.

These articles examine features of the type, to be replaced by an antitypical memorial, commemorating not the death of a lamb but of the real Deliverer foreshadowed by that lamb, Jesus of Nazareth. This new memorial would use new symbols, bread and wine. The article, Eat Thy Bread, Drink Thy Wine, sets forth the Old Testament antecedents for these New Testament symbols.

The concluding article, *Where is the Lamb?*, looks at a different, though related, event. It relates the story of the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah by his father Abraham.

This is a specially sacred season to many Christians. We desire that each of us examine our own selves and thus eat and drink in a worthy manner of the symbols illustrating this great deliverance, not only for the Christian but ultimately for every member of the human race (1Cor. 11:27-29).

The Passover Lamb

Behold the Lamb of God!

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—John 1:29

Richard Kindig

Jesus identified John the Baptist as being among the greatest prophets (Luke 7:28). After all, God granted John the unique honor of introducing the Messiah to the nation of Israel. Considering all the metaphors John might have used to describe Jesus to his people, he settled on only one: a lamb. "Behold the Lamb of God . . ."

Many Pictures of The Lamb

Abel's acceptable sacrifice was the best lamb of his flock. When Abraham walked toward Moriah, he expressed his faith that God would provide the lamb for the sacrifice; and of course he did. At the greatest personal cost to himself we can imagine, he delivered up his own son. In Isaiah's most passionate prophecy of Messianic suffering and sacrifice, he twice uses the figure of a lamb to depict the innocence and meekness of our Redeemer (Isa. 53:7).

When the glorified Jesus delivered his revelation to the Apostle John, he again used the lamb as a prominent figure. The victorious "lion of the tribe of Judah," who alone is worthy to unlock the seven seals of God's plan, is presented not as warlike and awe-inspiring but as "a little lamb having been slain" (Rev. 5:6, based on the meaning of the original Greek word for lamb, Strong's #721). The blood, which is declared to be so efficacious that it can purify individual followers of Jesus of their personal sins, is the blood of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 7:14).

To the early church, the lamb was the most fitting symbol of their Savior and Lord. "In very old sepulchers the lamb stands on a hill amid the four rivers of Paradise, or in the Baptist's hand. It sometimes carries a milk-pail and crook to represent the Good Shepherd. In the 5th century it is encircled with a nimbus. . . . In the 6th century it bears a spear. . . . In 692, the council of Trullo ordered the image of the Savior to be substituted for the Lamb."¹

This fascination with the lamb, and the hypocritical way in which the apostate church coupled a show of piety with its warlike tendencies, is revealed in the symbols of Revelation, chapter 13. There, the crude and repulsive beast which represents the bombastic early manifestations of apostate Christendom gets a new lease on life from a lamb-like two-horned beast. We are not to be fooled by the soft outward demeanor: it still speaks "like a dragon" and has considerable power to deceive. The true sheep will follow Jesus' voice; and they are thus pictured in Chapter 14:1, standing with their shepherd, the

Lamb, on Mount Zion! The slain lamb . . . what is there about this unfortunate yet victorious creature that is so compelling?

The Central Value of Sheep

First, let us look at the nature of lambs. From Abel onward, sheep have been of great importance, the most valuable of all God's creatures. All the patriarchs kept them. They provided meat, milk, leather, and wool. Their skins were used to keep wine, to make tents and hats and pillows. Even their horns were used, to store water and create music. A blast from a ram's horn announced redemption, worship, and freedom.

Of all the domesticated animals, the lamb touches the hearts of many. The average lamb weighs as much as a baby—about 7 pounds at birth. Its cry is just like that of a human. Children are often drawn to a lamb like no other barnyard baby animal. In disposition a baby lamb is much like a puppy—energetic, playful, endearing. On the occasion when a lamb's mother lacks milk or dies, a diligent shepherd can raise the orphan by bottle feeding. Such a lamb becomes a "pet," because it follows the children about the yard or even into the house. A lamb's loyalty and playfulness strike a responsive cord in the children who care for it.

The Passover Lamb

When God began to prepare Israel for freedom from Egyptian bondage, he crafted a most dramatic and memorable experience with lessons lasting for thousands of years. Central to the plot is not one lamb but tens of thousands: every family that wished to be delivered had to select and eat a lamb.

The parts of speech chosen to describe the selection process in Exodus 12 indicate the bonding experience each family would undergo. In verse 3, each family is told to "take to yourselves a lamb." At that point the little animal is anonymous, personless. The family is to plan ahead during the next few days and consider their appetite compared to the size of the animal they will be consuming. If they think their household will have extra to share, they are instructed to invite their next-door neighbor. It is now "the lamb"—a specific, measurable sacrifice whose efficacy as a feast can be "counted" (verse 4). By the fourteenth day, however, each family has bonded to this household pet; and so God refers to it next as "your lamb" (verse 5). This lamb is by now eating out of the children's hands, it has been given an endearing name, it lays on their bed. As the appointed time to take its life draws near, there is increasing anguish at the loss. "How can Abba kill our lamb?"

In every house, the final day before the night of Passover becomes a time for sober reflection. "We are slaves in Egypt. We are heirs of gracious promises. By God's decree, our eldest child will be killed by the destroying angel if we do not sacrifice this lamb. Our lamb is not just a meal to fill our bellies; he is our passport to freedom, and our deliverance from death." Especially would the bittersweet value of the lamb be felt by the firstborn in each family; the lives of a sibling, a parent, an uncle, or a cousin were hinging

upon the family's obedient observance of God's commands. Thoughts of personal unworthiness would mingle with sentiments of gratitude and hope as the impact of this unmerited substitution would sink in. We catch this personal sense of the grim importance of the lamb in Paul's words: "Christ, our pesach (paschal lamb) is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Christ Died for OUR Sins

The figure of the lamb forces our attention to the personal dimension of Christ's sacrifice. The Ransom, in its simplest sense, involves the exchange of Christ for Adam, and Paul boils it down to one righteous act in atonement for one willful act of disobedience (See Companion Bible comment on Romans 5:18).

The Passover sacrifice, by contrast, calls our attention to the many individual acts of disobedience and hardness of heart for which Christ suffers in his role as the world's Redeemer. Each household selects, becomes acquainted with, and ultimately kills and eats its own personal lamb. Paul emphasizes this aspect of Christ's sacrifice in Colossians 2:13,14. He refers to the writing nailed to Jesus' cross; customarily it contained the charge of wrongdoing for which the condemned was being punished. Yet, to be a king is not a sin worthy of death. Paul implies that what should have been written in three languages above the slain lamb's head were OUR many individual offenses. In Galatians 1:4 he brings out this thought again: "who gave himself for OUR sins." He gave himself to be the instrument used by God to remove sin from our hearts.

Martin Luther, in his commentary on the book of Galatians, makes much of that simple phrase, that Jesus was put to death for OUR sins.

"[Jesus gave] HIMSELF! For what? Not for a crown, not for a kingdom, not for our holiness and righteousness, but, for our sins. These words are very thunderclaps from heaven against all kinds of unrighteousness. . . . Our sins are taken away by no other means than by the Son of God delivered unto death. With such gunshot and artillery must all other notions be destroyed, all doctrine of merit, works, and superstitious ceremonies. For if our sins may be taken away by our own works, merit, and satisfaction, what needed the Son of God to be given for them. But seeing he was given for them it follows that we cannot put them away ourselves. . . . Our sins are so great, so infinite and invincible, that it is impossible for the whole world to satisfy for one of them. And surely the greatness of the ransom (namely, Christ the Son of God) declares . . . that we can neither satisfy for sin, nor have dominion over it. The force and power of sin is set forth, and amplified exceedingly by these words, 'which gave himself for our sins.' . . .

"The whole world is thus affected, especially they that would be counted more holy and righteous than others . . . These confess with their mouths that they are sinners, and that they daily commit sins . . . but [by their actions they seem to imply] that they are able to put [their sins] away by their own works; yes, and besides all this they will bring their righteousness and deserts to Christ's judgment-seat, and claim the recompense of eternal life for them at the Judge's hand.

"Let us learn here of Paul to fully and truly believe that Christ was given, not for feigned sins, nor for small, but for great and huge sins; not for few but for many; not for conquered sins (for no man can overcome the smallest sin to put it away) but for invincible sins.

"Hold this fast, and suffer not thyself to be drawn away by any means from this most sweet definition of Christ, which rejoices the very angels in heaven: that is to say, that Christ is no Moses, no lawgiver, no tyrant, but a mediator for sins; a free giver of grace, righteousness, and life: who gave Himself, not for our merits, righteousness, and godly life, but for our sins. . . . He is no caster-down of the afflicted, but a raiser-up of those that are fallen, a merciful reliever and comforter of the heavy and broken-hearted."2

We cannot compare our sins to those of other brethren—not if we want to accept Jesus' sacrifice on our own behalf. If we want to have a glimpse of how great our sins are in God's eyes, we need only look at the precious price that God used to atone for them.

"Firstborns" Are Only the First

The Passover demonstrates another feature of God's redemptive program: the shedding of the lamb's blood set apart a special class among the entire nation that God was saving—the firstborn. These were made precious, not by their actions or beliefs, but by God's decision to treat them specially, in advance of their brethren. After the night had passed, and the miraculous nature of their deliverance became apparent, these firstborn ones became the leaders and benefactors of their people. Paul applies this picture to the church of Christ: "the church of the firstborn, [whose names are] written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23).

This Passover symbolism is one of the strongest proofs we have that Christians saved in this age are not the only group who benefit from the blood of the Lamb. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall shepherd them with a staff of iron . . . even as I received of my Father. . . . Hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:26, 27, 29).

Yes, God delivers every firstborn who abides under the blood and eats of the feast. But in the morning, the entire nation starts its journey; and on the third day, after Satan takes his last stand and is swept away by the waters of the Red Sea, the church of the firstborn shares its victory from death with the rest of its family. This is truly "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE!"

The Lesson of Christian Unity

When the blood of the lamb was shed for us, and by faith we partook of all of it in our home, we became part of God's family. Our humanity makes us "sheep of his pasture" (Psa. 100:3), but our participation in the feast makes us doubly "his sheep" and able to render holy service of our own (John 10:1-16).

This participation in the flock of God that we enjoy is another forceful reminder of the unifying arrangement of the Passover itself. When each Jewish father put his hand to the lamb's neck to sacrifice it, the family was not permitted to set forth from the house again until the destroying angel had passed over. As the blood drained into the shallow basin or hollowed door-threshold, each member of the house became in a very real sense "blood-bought." Using pure hyssop branches, the father leaned out the door and dipped the blood and daubed it onto the lintel and side posts of their entrance. To leave would imply not only coming out from "under" the blood sprinkled above their head, but also to trample the blood at the threshold under foot.

Why did God choose an innocent lamb? Why did he decree that it must become part of our family before we slit its throat and eat its flesh? Because we must never forget the absolute innocence, loveliness, and tenderness of the victim who is put to death for our sins. And we must always remember that WE are the ones who kill the lamb and benefit from its merit. The life we gain, and the liberty we enjoy as sons of God, comes at the expense of the most precious life in the universe. Let us therefore keep the feast, not with malice and wickedness but with sincerity, humility, and truth.

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Not only Adam's sin, but my selfishness and hardness of heart; my laziness and pride; my unbelief and perverted judgment. For us he was slain, and because of his merit we can come boldly to the throne of God's grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

1. McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, "Lamb", Vol. 5, p. 206.

2. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, Erasmus Middleton trans., (Kregel Publishing House, 1959), pp. 11-14.

Cleaning House

"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel."—Exodus 12:15

Contributed

As shadows lead to the objects that cast them, so the pictures and shadows of the Old Testament were especially arranged for us by our loving Father to illustrate and teach lessons that will stand as a great monument of love and care to all God's creatures throughout eternity. But to us, his Son's beloved bride, and ultimately to all mankind were these lessons especially designed, and that from before the foundation of the earth. The whole of the universe speaks to this principle: the heavenly bodies, nature, animal, plant life, and even the peoples of various nations.

This principle is especially demonstrated in the festivals and celebrations and rituals contained in them that were given to ancient Israel. An explicit example of this is leaven. In its inherent characteristics it becomes a fitting illustration of corruption, decay, and death in all its various aspects. Leaven, or yeast, exists as a wild part of the natural environment and is found on plants, animals, and in the soil and is dispersed through the air and water. Leaven is an insidious substance that permeates the environment and alters everything with which it comes in contact. Thus the proverbial saying, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Ultimately, the only thing that will arrest its spread is fire. In the scriptures, leaven is used to symbolize only that which is evil.

Sin in the World

Sin entered the world through Father Adam's disobedience; and since man's expulsion from Eden into the unfinished parts of the earth, he has had continual contact with death and its con comitants, symbolized by leaven. And man has been unable to halt its spread mentally, morally, and physically. The ground out of which his food is now grown must be tilled with difficulty to sustain life. Plants that had medicinal properties previously—prolonged life and health in Eden—are no longer efficacious and certain evil powers work against man, dwarfing his mental and spiritual faculties, symbolized by leaven that permeated the very air and water so necessary for life. Satan, the prince of the power of the air and his cohorts, the fallen angels, contaminated the waters of God's truth through the creation of counterfeit religious systems.

The world before the Flood, ruled and guided by angelic beings, was an example of leavening forces at work. In just 1656 years after Adam was created, the world had become so debased and depraved that it was necessary for God to rid it of its evil

influences. After the flood, as the world's population grew and spread over the earth, the leaven of decay and corruption rapidly set in again with the aid of its spiritual leader Satan, until the earth (society) is now in such a state of affairs that it must be thoroughly cleansed of the evil by the fire of God's jealousy in this day of wrath (Zeph. 3:8).

Even though leavening forces have been active since man's fall, leaven did not come to typify sin, corruption, and decay until the Mosaic law, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law," "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died" (Rom. 5:13; 7:9).

Removing All Leaven

At the institution of the Passover the Israelites were instructed to search diligently throughout their households for leaven in any form—bones, crust, everything, before they could eat the Passover lamb. The search was not merely superficial but every dark corner had to be inspected for fear that one piece might be missed. This task was undertaken diligently because any leaven eaten during the Passover season was punishable by death. Once found, it was burned to thoroughly purge it from among them.

To the Christian, this thorough searching of the house represents a lifetime commitment of sacrifice to purge evil tendencies from his sinful nature. As a member of Adam's race and called to be the bride of Christ (see Lev. 23 [the church symbolized by the leaven in the two wave loaves offered at Pentecost]) he must conform to the likeness of Christ. This means that every dark corner of the heart and mind must be exposed to the searching light of God's word to reveal our hidden leaven. It is often difficult and painful to see ourselves as we really are, to face these ugly aspects of our characters without hauteur or feeble rationalizations and then to spend our energies in rooting and purging them thoroughly from our being.

Leaven must daily be kept from our door by straining out all impurities, seeing that they do not enter our hearts or thoughts. The result of permitting them to remain will work to our defilement to a greater or lesser degree.

The neglect of cleansing leaven from our hearts can have very destructive effects in ourselves and in our brethren. Since leaven has such a penetrating and diffusing power, it can quickly spread to others. A little envy, a little malice, a little anger, a little hatred, and a little strife may leaven our hearts completely and in a comparatively short time turn new nature into acid bitterness. Moreover, the leaven is not likely to be confined to one but spread to others, leavening the entire lump. Whoever finds any of these attitudes lurking anywhere in their heart should both by diligent effort and prayer cleanse himself from the leaven of corruption that he might be completely filled with the fruits of the spirit: meekness, gentleness, patience, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love, that these things might be in him and abound (2 Tim. 2:21-24).

Unleavened Bread

Once leaven was purged from the Israelites' houses they could eat the Passover lamb with unleavened bread. The first Passover, with its antitypical symbology, the antidote for sin and death, was pictured in unleavened bread. Jesus in his purity was "the bread from heaven." On the night of his death, Jesus particularly spelled out the meaning and antitype of the unleavened bread when he said, "take, eat; this is my body" (Matt. 26:26). "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). We are instructed to eat or feed on this bread, the antitypical body of Christ; by doing this in faith, we appropriate to ourselves his life, allowing us to become holy and perfect in God's sight. Thus we may join with him in becoming a blessing to the world of mankind.

Unleavened bread also represents truth and its influence, as leavened bread represents false doctrines and their effects. Jesus warned his disciples of the "leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees," and even of Herod. At first his disciples misunderstood and thought him to mean that they had neglected to provide for their temporal needs, but they quickly realized that he was talking about doctrinal hypocrisy. The Pharisees were the holy among the Jews and those who sat in Moses' seat; by this time in history their interpretation of the law had been intermingled with human traditions (later codified in the Talmud), which made all sick and poisoned the minds of the people who received it (Matt. 23:15). They had strayed so far from the original law of Moses that the leaders, and consequently the people, were unable to recognize their Messiah. The Law, a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ and to great glory, had been replaced by their traditions and, ultimately, led them to national death and destruction.

Even today the worst kind of hypocrisy is seen among modern pharisaical classes that presume to represent themselves as Christian but whose every act is in opposition to the principles of God's law, the prophets, and Christ's teachings. Where this spirit prevails, righteousness and justice are perverted and the people are impoverished and morally and spiritually weak.

Avoiding Hypocrisy

Today as Christians, we must be constantly vigilant to avoid not only doctrinal hypocrisy but also doctrinal corruption. We must be free from hypocrisy and remain doctrinally pure and in tune with the great Shepherd. Wolves may enter the flock (Acts 20:29; Matt. 7:15), spreading their perfidious leaven, but we must "try the spirits" and discriminate between doctrines presented as truth—even if their surface claim seems reasonable. The pure truth of God's Word is able to make us "wise unto salvation" and, as the Apostle says, "is sufficient, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

From this standpoint we readily see the force and meaning of the Master's declaration that at his return he would gird himself and come forth and serve his people and that he

would send forth at the hands of his servants things both new and old from the storehouse, "meat in due season," restoring doctrines long lost.

Leaven Adulterates Truth

In Matthew 13:33 we have an illustration of how leaven can thoroughly adulterate the truth. Here the history of the church during the Gospel age is summed up in one verse. Originally the Lord provided ample food (truth) for his people as symbolized in the three measures of meal. In the eating and digesting of this food the Lord's people would become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Gradually a woman arose, a false church, represented in Revelation as a harlot, and as "that woman Jezebel." This system obtained great power over the three measures of meal provided for God's household and proceeded to mix therewith the leaven of her own impurity. As a result all the family food, all the holy doctrines were contaminated with her false doctrines—nothing was left pure and clean, as handed down originally by the apostles. The faith once delivered to the saints was distorted out of all semblance to its original simplicity; the hope set before us in the Gospel was changed to another hope entirely, unlike the original; the spirit of the Lord, love, was perverted to a selfish love of creeds of men and human institutions. All Christendom became spiritually sick, because of this adulteration in its food supply. (Compare with Rev. 6:1-8; and the messages to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3.)

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:6 also used the insidious properties of leaven to represent immoral practices. He chastised the church at Corinth for allowing gross immorality to go unchecked. He referred to this sin as leaven and further explained that leaven, unless halted, can go on to infect the remaining members of the church by "leavening the whole lump." If not purged, the spiritual health of all the brethren and the teachings of the truth are in jeopardy. Our standard is one of righteousness and anything less will have a destructive effect on the name and cause of Christ (1 Cor. 5:11-13).

As we renew our consecration at this Memorial season, may we each resolve to daily purge out the old leaven so that we may become a vital part of the new lump. Thus, everyday will be a true feast of unleavened bread, and we will be meet for the Master's use now and into the future, blessing not only our fellow man but all beings that will ever be created (Psa. 45:17).

Leaven—A Symposium

A Little Leaven

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."—Galatians 5:9

Contributed

The picture of Jesus as a lamb emphasizes the benefit we all gain from our Lord's sacrifice in the area of personal sins. It is a picture of an innocent substitute, a price applied before God on our behalf . . . something that we could never do for ourselves, no matter how conscientious and obedient we may become. The picture of the leaven, on the other hand, emphasizes our own role in removing sin from our thoughts, words, and deeds.

To understand the picture of leaven, we must first focus on the scriptural symbolism of bread.

In the Bible, bread is used to depict the provisions God makes for our sustenance. From time immemorial, bread has been known as "the staff (support that we can lean on) of life."

God provides the raw materials of bread: the water, soil, sun and seed. Man prepares the ground, plants the seed, fertilizes, tends, weeds, then harvests and combines the grain with other ingredients to make an edible and digestible product. The entire process represents a partnership in which God provides the ingredients and the recipe and man does the work.

When the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness, they were unable to plant and harvest grain, so God demonstrated his power and mercy by providing manna, the bread from heaven. Even here God enlisted the cooperation of the people: it was their responsibility to gather the manna each day.

In the pictures of bread presented in the tabernacle, the priests had regular duties of preparation and presentation of the bread on the table of shewbread. The spiritual sustenance of the priest thus required diligence; their food, like the light of the candlestick, was perishable. Only in the Most Holy was the bread permanent: the golden pot of manna in the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy represented life which God provides, and in this case the incorruptible, immortal life to which the "Christ of God" is heir.

Leavened and Unleavened Bread

Bread can be made with or without leaven. Yeast causes bread to rise, increasing its volume without increasing its weight. What, then, does leaven signify? Why did God permit it most of the time but prohibit its use during Passover?

Paul is quite clear in 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 that leaven symbolizes sin: "malice and wickedness." Its opposite, bread without leaven, may therefore typify a pure life of "sincerity and truth."

Two Hebrew words are used to depict leaven: seor, yeast, which comes from a root meaning "to swell"; and chametz, leavened bread, which comes from a Hebrew root meaning "sour." A third Hebrew word, matzah, refers to unleavened bread and literally means "sweet"—the opposite of sour. All three words are used in Exodus 13:7: "Unleavened bread [matzah] shall be eaten during the seven days, and there shall not be seen with thee fermented bread [chametz], and there shall not be seen with thee leavened dough [seor] in all thy borders."

God was very serious about this prohibition: a penalty of death was attached to anyone who ate leaven at this time (Exod. 12:19).

The Sourness and Swelling of Sin

Sourness and swelling: these are the two major results of sin. Sin is sour. It produces all the bitterness of life: hurtfulness, damage, bad fruitage. And behind every sin there is the tell-tale swelling of pride. The swelling propensity of leaven clearly illustrates the deceptive quality of pride: inside our own mind we stumble from self-importance, self-exaltation, vanity, "thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought."

Thoughts lead to words: "swelling words of vanity." Sins become more contagious because the swelling disposition of spiritual pride presents an inflated, deceptive show of righteousness that often upstages the more meek, less poised presentation of the Lord's faithful (2Cor. 3:12, 10:7-18). Christendom on earth has been dominated throughout its history by the proud, the boastful, and the deceptive, who appear to be larger spiritually than they are (Rev. 2:13-15, 19-20).

"Purge Out the Leaven" in the Congregation

In our self-centered culture personal self-examination prior to the memorial feast is important. But in the context of Paul's discussion about leaven in 1 Corinthians 5, just as in the Jewish observance in each household, the primary emphasis seems to be the removal of gross sin from the group.

In the 1 Corinthians 5 passage, a man called a brother had been guilty of fornication. Paul is shocked by the church's sense of complacency about the incident. Perhaps the members of the ecclesia felt that their tolerance of his actions was a sign of love and

maturity, but not so to the Apostle Paul. He emphatically used his apostolic authority to do what the ecclesia should have done and disfellowshipped the errant believer. "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" Just as in natural sourdough bread, the infecting agent spreads until every bit of the dough is laced with bitterness and swollen with false pretensions. Concerning ecclesias, Paul implores them to take action against clear-cut public examples of fornication, idolatry, covetousness, extortion, railing, and drunkenness of those who claim to be members of the ecclesia. If no action is taken, their false liberality will have the effect of allowing worldly and ungodly contamination to damage the church of Christ.

The example Paul records in 1 Corinthians 5 was firm instruction and the ecclesia at Corinth obeyed Paul and disfellowshipped the sinner in their midst. The intended effect of such action is not punishment but the recovery of the sinner through acknowledgment of the sin, repentance from the error, and forgiveness by the injured brethren. Possibly the 1 Corinthians 5 story had a happy ending in 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, where Paul states, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted by the majority; so that contrariwise you ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye should confirm your love toward him."

Paul is quite clear that the church should never set out on a campaign of judgmentalism, a witch-hunt to find and expose the sinners in its midst. The goal is "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15, 31). If we want to enjoy the blessings of peace and spiritual prosperity which accompany God's favor, it is imperative that the simple, clear standards of discipleship are upheld with humility and courage (2 Tim. 2:2, 14).

Two cautions: (1) Paul warns against self-righteousness, by assuring us that any sin that can be found in the world may be conquered by the love of Christ (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

(2) Subtle ostracism should not be used if there is a person in the midst about whom there are doubts or with whom there is disagreement. That is the worldly way. Instead, we should be open with those whom we believe to be acting below biblical standards, and honest-hearted confrontation (sometimes privately, sometimes publicly: Matt. 18:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2; 1Tim. 4:13-16, 5:1, 19-20, 6:17) is one of the scriptural tools to be used to keep communication above-board and the love-feast pure and unfeigned (Jude 4,12, 16-19).

Three Kinds of Leaven: "Beware"

Jesus warned us to beware of three distinct kinds of leaven. In Luke 12:1, he warns us of the "leaven of the Pharisees," which he defines as hypocrisy. Hypocrites was the Greek term used for the profession of theatrical acting. At that time, actors would wear a mask to depict the public sentiments they desired to project. Behind the weeping mask, the hypocrite could be laughing. Or behind the laughing mask, he could be crying. As Jesus pointed out, anything other than letting your yea be yea or your nay really mean nay is evil (Matt. 5:37).

We should not attempt to bypass an issue in order "to avoid stumbling the brethren." Rather, we should be open about what is happening in our lives. "Confess your faults one to another, and you will be healed" (James 5:16). If we do not, we should not deceive ourselves. As Jesus said in Luke 12:2, there is nothing covered that will not be revealed. The hidden sentiments of our heart will be exposed.

Another type of leaven that Jesus warned of, as distinct from the leaven of the Pharisees, is found in Mark 8:15: "the leaven of Herod." Though Jesus does not elaborate, he may be calling attention to and warning against the sin of worldliness, power, or political compromise. "Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15; John 15:18). The Jude text cited earlier (Jude 16) seems to indicate that some of the destructive forces in the church would demonstrate partiality and distort truth "because of advantage." This is the worldly spirit, which puts short-term personal gain ahead of principles such as justice, love, and impartial brotherly affection. The sins of Balaam and Cain (Jude 11) seem to be similar manifestations of the leaven of Herod.

The third kind of leaven Jesus warns us of is "the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees" (Matt. 16:11,12). Here, our Lord focused not on their hypocrisy but on their doctrine—their teachings. In one sense, any false teaching is sin; but because the Pharisees and Sadducees shared very few doctrines, we think the "leaven" Jesus spoke of had more to do with the thought processes they used in arriving at their false conclusions. Jesus identified at least five such perversions in the Pharisees' and Sadducees' teaching: (1) They put their traditions ahead of the Word of God (Mark 7:3-13). (2) They emphasized the outward rather than the inward (Matt. 23:23, 25; 15:11). This is legalism: "the letter kills; the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). (3) They limited the grace of God, which had the effect of discouraging the humble whom God cared about most, while elevating the outwardly acceptable and proud (Luke 18:9-14). (4) They placed burdens upon their hearers that they themselves did not bear (Matt. 23:4). (5) They strained out gnats and swallowed camels: they were inconsistent in their reasoning and application of principle (Matt. 23:24, 14-22).

Examining Ourselves

The most important part of spiritual leaven-removal for the Christian is that which we do in our own heart (1 Cor. 11: 23-31). Paul warns us not to be self-deceived. (Note the three kinds of self-deception Paul warns of in 1 Cor. 6:9, 15:33, and in Gal. 6:7.) Let us not focus on the long list of outward actions committed which do not quite pass inspection. Also, we are in danger of settling into years of spiritual mediocrity if we habitually compare ourselves with those around us (2 Cor. 10:12). Instead, the holy Scriptures are our standard. Let us compare ourselves to that perfect mirror (James 1:15-27) and examine the root causes of the horrifying sins revealed—serious defects in our fundamental attitudes, habits of thought, values, and character.

We will need to allow God to remake us, purging the root causes of sin (Rom. 12:1). Principles of love and justice must, by active submission and active obedience, be

allowed to replace the weeds of fleshly thinking that make up our lower nature. (Note the series of replacement activities called for in Eph. 4:17-32, and the positive thought and action suggestions in Phil. 4:4-9.)

The task is daunting, but not hopeless. We are not attempting to make ourselves worthy of God's love and eternal life. Rather, we are attempting to do our part of the sanctification process. God works in us, both to will and to do his good pleasure. Like the saw, we only need to rest in the carpenter's hands and allow the cutting to proceed. The workmanship is the Lord's, and the glory belongs to him.

A Joyous Feast

Passover, and the ceremony surrounding it, is a feast. God meant it to be a joyous celebration. It still is for the Jews to this day. Though it is appropriately mixed with self-examination and conscious effort to remember painful experiences of ourselves and others, the bottom line should be a joyous celebration of past blessings and future hopes—high hopes, representative of the only real human story ending with, "and they all lived happily ever after."

We rejoice that though we have leaven in our houses it can be removed; and if we are having trouble removing it, we have our heavenly Father who will "search us with candles"¹ (Zeph. 1:12) until we see the leaven in our hearts. We rejoice that God pictured the imperfection of our little offering in the fact that the "wave loaves" offered in Leviticus 23 demonstrate that both the church and great company contain the leaven of sin—and yet by God's grace (through Christ) they are acceptable sacrifices to him! (See Lev. 23:9-22, esp. vs. 17.)

We rejoice that there is a willing sacrificial lamb provided for us; and we have the privilege of feasting upon that lamb. We rejoice that even now, though troubles surround us and Satan's minions are pursuing us, we have escaped the dark night of Egyptian slavery. We are headed for the Promised Land. Our leader, Jesus, is at the head of the column. All our provisions are in place—the food, the raiment, the shoes, and the animals we will need to sacrifice in worship to the Lord. All we need to do is put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward in the Lord's way!

May each of us give thanks and praise to God for the glorious deliverance he has provided. Have a blessed Memorial!

1. This is a reference to the ancient Jewish tradition of having the father of the household ceremonially inspect the household after the mother did the cleaning in preparation for Passover.

Ready for a Journey

With Staff in Hand

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord."—Exodus 12:11-12

Michael Costelli

When Jehovah God freed the Israelites from Pharaoh's heavy-handed treatment, he furnished them with specific instructions on how to prepare for the departure. Their instructions included the preparation of a sacrificial lamb and the distribution of its shed blood on the door posts and the lintels for all of the firstborn who would expect to escape the death angel. They were instructed to prepare and eat the Passover lamb with great sobriety and anticipation of a swift departure from the land of Egypt. They were to eat it "with . . . loins girded, shoes on your feet, and . . . staff in hand; and ye shall eat it in haste, it is the LORD'S passover."

Israel had long been under the bondage of the Pharaohs in Egypt, unjustly enslaved. It had not been so during the kinder days of Joseph's administration and the rulership of the next few Pharaohs. Providential overruling saw to it that the Israelites would grow and develop and gain national strength in the land of Egypt. The twelve tribes remained intact and united, not disintegrated into other lands where they might have had an abode. No social intercourse appears to have developed between Israelites and Egyptians.

They were directed to the land of Goshen described as ". . . in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, . . ." (Gen. 47:11). The Hyksos kings were on the throne of Egypt at this time, having previously invaded the land. The Egyptians hated them. Joseph was favored, and likewise his people, by the Hyksos pharaoh; this preserved the Hebrews from associating with Egyptians and falling into their idolatry. We can readily see the providential significance of this historical situation in opening the way for the sojourn of Israel into Egypt. Here the words God had declared to Abraham were fulfilled—that his seed would be out of the promised land for a period (Acts 7:17-19; Gen. 15:13-14).

Genesis ends with the promise of a dying Joseph that "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land in the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob" (Gen. 50:24-25).

Types and Shadows

Old Testament types were furnished for examples to the Christian. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). The night of the Passover represents the night of the Gospel age (Psa. 30:5). Natural Israel represents spiritual Israel—the church of the Gospel Age. Pharaoh in the Land of Egypt represents Satan, the god of this world, and his oppressive action against the body of Christ throughout the Gospel age. Moses represents Jesus Christ: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, unto him ye shall hearken;" (Deut. 18:15, Acts 3:22). The Passover lamb slaying represents the sacrificial death of Christ to save the world from Adam's sin and restore it to an opportunity of life everlasting. The Death Angel symbolizes the condition of death from which the spiritual firstborn (the church) only (Heb. 12:23) are saved during the Gospel age. The spreading of the blood on the doorposts and lintels pictures the blood of Jesus Christ saving the church from Adamic condemnation of death during the Gospel age.

Clearly the mobilization of approximately 2,000,000 Israelites (counting women and children, Exod. 12:37) was a serious logistical concern. The confusion in Egypt caused by the ten plagues, which climaxed in the death of all unprotected firstborn, permitted sufficient time and opportunity for Israel to organize and depart. The record tells us that they "borrowed jewels" (Exod. 12:35). These, however, were not loans, but gifts—payment of debts for accumulated generations of slave labor. God commanded the Egyptians to supply the Israelites' necessities and even some luxuries for their trip (Exod. 3:21-22; 11:2-3). After the plagues, the Egyptians feared the Hebrew people (Exod. 12:33).

The Israelites were instructed to be dressed and ready to go in the morning after partaking of the Passover the evening before. Promptness and attention to detail would mark the successful Israelite in his or her escape from bondage. God's instructions to his people throughout the ages have been marked with sufficient clarity and economy of words that have meant life and health to the hearer and doer of that word (Deut. 4:1; 6:1-2; 8:1).

The expressions "having your loins girded and your shoes on your feet and your staff in hand" picture the individual's complete preparation for a long and arduous journey. The specific utterance which we will examine is "staff in hand."

Staff: For Standing

The idiom "staff in hand" or "staff" occurs in eleven books of the Old Testament. Strong's Concordance defines the Hebrew word for staff, *maqquelah*, "to germinate a shoot, i.e. a stick (with leaves) for walking, striking, guiding, rod, staff."

One familiar use of a staff is an instrument to assist in standing erect. One can well imagine the conditions of traveling through the difficult environment of the Egyptian and Sinai Deserts; it is easy to see where a long, wooden rod would be invaluable for support.

A staff would be handy to resist the wind forces of an abrupt desert sand storm. Leaning upon a staff would provide valuable moments of rest and relaxation from the rigors of travel.

As Christians, we are reminded to confidently stand in our faith in our heavenly Father (Rom. 5:2). Our standing is that favored position as sons of God which we enjoy through the shed blood of our Master and Savior Jesus. Additionally, while we stand, we ". . . rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This hope is built on the exceeding great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4) given us by the Father that we will behold his glory as the Son does behold his glory. We have a foretaste of the immensity of the glory of God.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13, we are admonished to "stand fast in the faith", to be like men—strong. We are to do all things in love. Elsewhere we are encouraged to "stand fast, therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

In Ephesians 6:13 a wardrobe for the successful Christian soldier is given to us. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: . . ." This wardrobe is analogous to Israel's just before their departure from Egypt. The similar language of "loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in hand" are strikingly similar to the implements given in Ephesians 6. Israel was commanded to be properly attired and ready to go—so should we. It is imperative that we learn how the armor is to be appropriated and maintained in our walk with the Lord. We start, therefore, with our loins girded about with truth. Jesus told us that we would know the truth and the truth would set us free. This liberty about which we have just spoken is a precious feature of our faith and should be carefully guarded as we "keep our hearts with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." We should watch and pray—pray always that we not enter into temptation by becoming spiritually lethargic.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins reminds us that it is possible and, yea, even probable that many will sleep, flagging in their Christian zeal. We wear the breastplate of righteousness, having our sins covered by Christ's precious blood. Our feet are shod with the gospel of peace as we tell all with whom we have contact about the divine plan of our heavenly Father to bring peace on earth in a way never before experienced by man. In faith, we quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one since we are confident that regardless of what our Father may permit, we will not fall if we do these things (2 Peter 1:10).

Jesus commanded his followers upon their departure into the ministry that "they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse" (Mark 6:8). As the text goes on, it is clear that Jesus is not concerned about the

mundane matters of food and dress as it relates to the advancement of his Father's kingdom. Jesus' admonition is to "seek ye first the kingdom of heaven" and all mundane necessities will be supplied for the execution of our responsibilities.

Staff: Sword of the Spirit

The Hebrews in the desert went forth with staff in hand led by Moses; the Christian similarly goes forward through the desert of this world's condition with the sword of spirit in hand, led by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). In the Ephesians account, all implements of the armor are set for defense while the sword of the spirit appears to be an implement of offense. Truth is not a passive but active characteristic as that "shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

Moses wielded his "rod" in Exodus 4:2 in an authoritative and combative fashion. Here the word "rod" is from the Hebrew *matteh*, (Strong's #4294), and is elsewhere translated staff (Gen. 38:18, Isa. 9:4, 10:5, 15, 24, 14:5, 28:27, 30:32). Jehovah directed Moses to use his staff to convince Hebrews to "believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob hath appeared unto thee." Later, the rod of Aaron, upon becoming a serpent, swallowed the serpents which developed from the rods of Pharaoh's magicians. This beautifully pictures how the truth will consume and replace error and darkness. Satan will wage a strong war and prove to be a formidable foe but will ultimately be destroyed in the process (Heb. 2:14). Truth, the word of God, is "sharper than any two-edged sword." It exposes error before God and the world and is a discerner of the intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). We are symbolically reminded of the Son of man of Revelation 1:13 walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks, out of whose mouth "went a sharp two-edged sword." Truth demands that we abandon preconceived, erroneous notions, especially concerning the nature and plans and purposes of our God and his Son Christ Jesus. Many seeds of error have been sown concerning these basic truths so as to distort and even prevent the truth from becoming known to many of the world's inhabitants (Matt. 13:25).

Staff: Support, Comfort, Rest

One of the most popular scriptural verses on this subject is found in Psalms 23:4, "thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The word "rod" in Psalms 23 is taken from #7626. The rod and staff of Psalms 23:4 provides both correction and protection. David says that although he is walking through the valley of the shadow of death (Adamic condemnation and death), he fears no evil because he is comforted with the word of truth that his heavenly Father has given.

The earthly shepherd uses his staff to carefully and lovingly direct his sheep into an area of protection and nurturing. A close relationship develops between the sheep and the shepherd. Sheep come to recognize the familiar tones of their master's voice and are unwilling to respond to others. Jesus, the good Shepherd, exercises his pastoral care with the spiritual staff of his truth and its many faceted ministry to the sons of God (Heb. 7:25). A foretaste of the glory to come and a glimpse into our heavenly Father's plan is

more than ample to sustain us through the night of this Gospel age. We sorrow not as those who have no hope and look forward joyfully to the morning of the Millennial dawn. It is not necessary for us to know all the details of its inauguration, but it is sufficient that we are familiar with its concepts so beautifully expressed in holy scripture (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Staff: Authority, Rulership

The writer to the Hebrews mentions "staff" in regard to Jacob's dying request. In Hebrews 11:21 (Diaglott) Benjamin Wilson comments that Joseph's "rod" was higher or his power was greater than all others; consequently Jacob worshipped God on account of the height of Joseph's power. The King James translation renders the word "rod" (from Strong's #7626), meaning "rulership." God's rulership in our lives is a comfort to us.

Summary

Thus we have seen how the walk of the consecrated man or woman of God is typified in that ancient trek of the Israelites out of Egypt into the promised land. We see that the staff or rod utilized by Moses, Aaron and others in making this journey beautifully typifies the staff of authority, comfort, protection, confidence; all of which are derived from an abiding faith in an eternal God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). We can rest surely in that "He who has begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Let us go forth wielding our staff in hand in an authorized manner to honor and glorify our heavenly Father and obey Jesus Christ. Let us, like the ancient Hebrews, "walk in newness of life" carrying our "staff in hand," enabling us to go forward in our Christian journey.

A Second Passing Over

God Divideth the Sea

"But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name."—Isaiah 51:15

Verse by verse Bible study in Exodus 14

Passover is the oldest continually observed holiday in history. For over three thousand years Israelites have used this day to recount their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. The form of observance from that which God ordained in Exodus 12 has changed, but the remembrance of that marvelous deliverance is annually renewed.

While the term "passover" relates particularly to the saving of the firstborn children of Israel from the death angel, there were two other "passings over" which are also commemorated. The first of these, which we will investigate in this article, is the "passing over" of the Red Sea by the Hebrews a few days after leaving their Egyptian homes in Goshen. Then there was the still larger "passing over" of the intervening desert that lay between Egypt and the promised land, a "passing over" that was extended forty long years because of their lack of faith.

The Setting—Verses 1 to 4

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so."

There were three trade routes connecting Egypt with their trading partners to the east. The "Way of the Philistines" (or *Via Maris*, "the way of the sea"), hugged the shoreline of the Mediterranean as far as present day Tel Aviv before turning northeastward to Assyria. The "Way of Shur" was so named for the "shur" or great wall of Egypt, a long fortified wall separating ancient Egypt from the deserts to the east. This road paralleled the *Via Maris* some thirty miles to the south, going through the trading center of Beersheba. Further south, the "Way to Arabia" followed a line of oases due eastward to the copper-rich area of Aqaba, from whence it entered into present-day Saudi Arabia.

When the Israelites began their journey to Succoth (Exod. 12:37), it appeared that they would take the "Way of Shur." However once assembled they took a sharp turn northward crossing the "Way of the Philistines" and camping to the west, between Bazal-Zephon and Pi-Hahiroth. Some writers suggest that Pi-Hahiroth is not a place name, but

should be translated as a topographical description, "the mouth of the gorge." Here they were surrounded by the tall walls of a great gorge with a "sea of reeds" in front.

Evidently Pharaoh had his spies following the fleeing Israelites. They reported back that the Hebrews appeared to be lost in the wilderness, not following any of the well-traveled roads, and now encamped in a gorge with impassable water in front of them. It was a perfect situation for Pharaoh to recapture his slave labor and once again bring them into bondage.

However, as in so many other instances, what appears to be wise strategy on the part of the enemies of God's people is really part of Jehovah's overruling providence for them. The little word "for" which opens verse three shows that it was God's intent from the beginning to take this route in order to lure Pharaoh into the battle.

Although most translations credit God with "hardening" the heart of Pharaoh, this is not the only sense of the Hebrew word *chazaq* (Strong's #2388). The usual meaning of the word, according to the lexicon of Brown, Driver, and Riggs, is "to strengthen." Probably here the thought of the word is to firmly set Pharaoh's heart to do what he had already determined to be done.

The ultimate purpose, however, of this entire maneuver was not so much to destroy the Egyptian army as to clearly demonstrate once and for all the superiority of Israel's God to that of their oppressors. This had been the special mark of each of the plagues preceding the Exodus, each successive plague exposing a different god of the Egyptians.

We are to remember, too, that these instructions God gave to Moses and not to all of Israel. As the leader of the people and one well accustomed to the desert, he would have found it strange to take the route by which God led them. God, however, informed Moses that the purpose was to entrap Pharaoh and his hosts. "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

The Pursuit—Verses 5 to 9

"And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon."

The pursuit begins. The army of Pharaoh seems unreasonably small. An Egyptian chariot carried three men: the charioteer, who seldom fought; a soldier to protect the charioteer; and one soldier to fight the enemy. Thus the entire force of the Egyptians is

approximately 1800, sent out to bring back nearly two million fleeing slaves. It was evidently considered sufficient, however, since the Israelites were unarmed and used to being in subjection and therefore timid to challenge authority. There may also have been other foot-soldiers, not mentioned in listing the number of chariots. Josephus claims that Pharaoh was accompanied by 200,000 horsemen and 50,000 footmen.

Israel's Reaction—Verses 10 to 14

"And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? was not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

How quickly confidence turns to fear when there is a lack of faith! Marching out with a "high hand," they now quiver in fearful foreboding. As in any traumatic experience, therein lies a test. There was a twofold reaction by the Israelites. The sense of the Hebrew is that some cried unto the Lord (v. 10) while others cried unto Moses (v. 11). The former properly resorted to prayer, the latter to murmuring. The former saw the cloud leading them onward, the latter saw merely a man who seemingly had made a fatal leadership mistake.

How short is memory in times of distress! Had not Moses been the instrument of God in plague after plague, ultimately freeing them of years of enforced slavery? They distrusted Moses from the start. "Was not this the word we did tell thee in Egypt?" Yes, they had complained there also. When Moses' pleadings with Pharaoh brought forth the edict to make bricks without straw, they had said, "The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us" (Exod. 5:21).

The direction they were given to "stand still" was not a direction to idleness but to resoluteness of purpose. The Revised Standard version correctly translates it as "stand firm." Do not be swayed by the seeming impossibility of your circumstances. Have faith in God. He who has led thee thus far will lead thee further.

Moses assured the people that if they would trust God in this newest of a long series of confrontations it would be the last time they would need to face the dreaded Egyptians: "ye shall see them again no more for ever." The victory was to be such a manner as to both reveal to the Egyptians that Jehovah was the superior deity and to show the Israelites that any deliverance would not be by their own acumen or power. To put the closing

words of this section into colloquial English, "Do not worry. Quiet down. God will fight for you."

Go Forward—Verses 15 to 18

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

"Go forward!" These were the marching orders. The lifting of Moses' rod was to symbolically provide the power to separate the waters of the sea ahead so that the Israelites could go through dry shod. Seeing their captives escape, the Egyptians would plunge in after them.

The New American Standard version translates verse 25, " And he caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and he made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

This suggests that perhaps their heavier chariot wheels would soon become bogged down in the mud, as would their horses' hooves. Thus mired down, they could go neither forward nor retreat to the rear. They had little choice but to watch in horror as the waters rolled back over them and they drowned. Thus did Jehovah vindicate himself and demonstrate to the Egyptian people who was truly God.

The same command has always been the word of God when his people are surrounded by difficulties. It remains so today. "Go forward!" If our hearts will truly "stand firm" in their resoluteness to serve our God, then our trust will continue in its determination to do so no matter how formidable may seem the barriers ahead or how powerful our fears seek to have their paralyzing effect.

Deliverance—Verses 19 to 29

"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it

came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."

There were five steps in the deliverance process. (1) the cloud moved from over the camp of Israel to their rear, hiding the movements of Israel from the Egyptians. (2) A strong east wind drove back the waters of the sea. It is therefore probable that the canyon walls of the gorge stretched from north to south, the winds pushing the waters to the right and left so that they formed a wall on both sides of the fleeing Israelites. (3) A sufficiently wide passage was opened up for some two million Israelites with their herds and their belongings, to pass through dry shod. (4) The pursuing Egyptians soon found their chariot wheels bogged down. Some feel that the Hebrew text suggests that the surging of the horses actually pulled the wheels off the chariots, so that they were forced to evacuate and flee by foot. (5) Finally a sudden let-up in the wind caused the waters to fall back into their natural channels, thus completely overwhelming the Egyptians.

Moses' part in the drama was to hold forth his rod. It is not that this rod divided the sea by itself but that it became the command to the winds to do so. In like manner, having crossed, the cessation of the winds came again at the holding forth of Moses' hands (v. 27). The force of the winds would not only divert the waters but, blowing all night, would somewhat dry out the land beneath as well.

It seems amazing that wind from the east sufficiently strong to part the waters of the sea would not hinder the crossing of the sea as well. If the passage were from west to east the Israelites would be running directly into the face of the wind and if their passage were from north to south there would be such a strong cross-current as to make it difficult if not impossible to stand upright. Thus it would seem that the wind was a closely controlled force and not attributable to an ordinary blast.

A possible allusion to this crossing of the Red Sea is furnished in Job 26:12: "He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud [Hebrew, Rahab, a symbolic name for Egypt (see Psa. 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 51:9)]. This indicates that the crossing of the Red Sea was prior to the time of Job.

The Aftermath—Verses 30 and 31

"Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses."

The returning waters washed up on shore the dead Egyptians. Not only did this assure Israel that the opposing army had been, indeed, completely defeated but it may have also provided a ready supply of weaponry which they would need for their subsequent wilderness battles against the Amorites and other foes. God is a great economist. One action may have many side effects. A parallel to this was in Israel's modern six-day war of June 1967. Israel had been running short of iron for their smelting of copper at Eilat. After the war, their supplies were replenished with the tanks and other war equipment of the demolished Egyptian forces.

Now, with renewed vigor, they could again march forward "with high hand." The song of Moses and the dance of Miriam in chapter 15 demonstrate their new-found courage. But, alas, it was not to last long. Over the next forty years they were to be brought repetitively face to face with hardship and overwhelming odds. Repetitively they succumbed to the spirit of fear. They tried not only the patience of Moses but that of God himself. As a result most of the people who left Egypt were not to achieve their goal and enter the promised land. Yet this did not annul the promises and power of God. Forty years later their descendants did inherit it, conquer it, and claim it for their own.

This is the sad lesson of the Exodus. This is the lesson to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 10:11, 12: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Yet, God had a grander purpose in mind. That was a purpose that would not fail. He would take of this people of Israel and prepare them for future work. Out of their midst, some 2000 years later, would come Jesus of Nazareth. He would select, initially from the Jewish people and adding Gentiles, a people who would become the "new heavens" of his kingdom. And he will still take, in some near future point of time, another faithful remnant of Israelites to form the "new earth" of this kingdom.

This, the prophet declares, was the real reason for dividing the sea and bringing Israel through dry shod. "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people" (Isa. 51:14-16).

Future Crossings

On three future occasions were there to be crossings of water beds dry shod: Israel was to end their wilderness wanderings as they began them, crossing another body of water on dry ground. This time it would be the passage over Jordan into Canaan. Several centuries later two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, were to cross that same river on dry ground. One of them, Elisha, was to part the waters a final time before returning dry shod to the west bank of the stream.

On all of these occasions one of the chief lessons is the passing over of the death sentence. And that is just the relationship the crossing of the Red Sea had to the Passover a few days prior. As the Passover was to picture the deliverance of the "firstborn," the "church of the living God," from the death sentence, so the passing over of the Red Sea was to picture the ultimate and subsequent deliverance of the whole world of mankind from the clutches of death. Then they will be trained, tested, and tried to see whether they have the proper faith to claim the "promised land" of eternal life.

The Beginning of Months

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."—Exodus 12:1, 2

Reprinted from THE HERALD of December 15, 1931

Many are the lessons of scripture that emphasize the thought of the completeness of the change that takes place in those who become God's children and who are inducted fully into his family. The word "conversion" is a very good one as applied to one in the act of turning from the life of sin and the world to that of righteousness and the service of God. It is defined as "the act of turning or changing from one state or condition to another, or the state of being changed." As the course of sin and the course of nature under the present conditions of the fall are contrary and in opposition to God, so the process of getting into harmony with God means a reversal of the accustomed order. It means, in fact, the introduction of a new order into life.

Real Life Only in God

When God visited his ancient people in Egypt and began a dispensation of dealings with them as his peculiar people, he instituted through Moses a very interesting change in the order of time. The ordinary or civil year was rolling on in its usual course when the Lord interrupted it in reference to his people, and in so doing, taught them the lesson of a new experience—that of the beginning of a new order or era in company with him. Their past history and experience was to be regarded as a blank. Salvation, deliverance, was to mark the first advance of real life with him. We ask, is not this bit of history in Israel suggestive of some important lessons applicable to spiritual Israel?

"This teaches a plain truth," says an interesting writer commenting upon the incident. "A man's life is really of no account until he begins to walk with God, in the knowledge of full salvation and settled peace, through the precious blood of the Lamb. Previous to this, he is, in the judgment of God, and in the language of Scripture, 'dead in trespasses and sins;' 'alienated from the life of God.' His whole history is a complete blank, even though, in man's account, it may have been one uninterrupted scene of bustling activity. All that which engages the attention of the men of the world—the honors, the riches, the pleasures, the attractions of life, so called—all, when examined in the light of the judgment of God, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, must be accounted as a dismal blank, a worthless void, utterly unworthy of a place in the records of the holy spirit. 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life' (John 3:36). Men speak of 'seeing life' when they launch forth into society, travel hither and thither, and see all that is to be seen; but they forget that the only true, the only real, the only divine way to 'see life' is to believe on the Son of God."

Life Begins at the Cross

The natural man, ignorant of the experiences of the life of God, cannot be expected to appreciate this viewpoint. Such an one supposes that "real life," life in the sense of really being interested in living, ceases on becoming a Christian in truth and reality, not merely in a nominal or outward sense; while the word of God teaches that it is only as we come to know him that we can really see life and taste of genuine happiness. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). And again, "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Continuing, the above writer says:

"We get life and happiness only in Christ. Apart from him all is death and misery, in heaven's judgment, whatever the outward appearance may be. It is when this thick veil of unbelief is removed from the heart, and we are enabled to behold, with the eye of faith, the bleeding Lamb, bearing our heavy burden of guilt upon the cursed tree, that we enter upon the path of life and partake of the cup of divine happiness—a life which begins at the cross and flows outward into an eternity of glory—a happiness which each day becomes deeper and purer, more connected with God and founded on Christ, until we reach its proper sphere, in the presence of God and the Lamb. To seek life and happiness in any other way is vainer work by far than seeking to make bricks without straw."

Nothing Satisfying But in Christ

The Adversary seeks to keep men in ignorance of the life of fellowship with God. His methods are legion; he has a variety of ways of alluring the human mind to keep up the mad rush after the world and its illusive bubbles. "The enemy of souls spreads a gilding over the passing scene, in order that men may imagine it to be all gold. He sets up many a puppet show to elicit the hollow laugh from a thoughtless multitude, who will not remember that it is Satan who is in the box, and that his object is to keep them from Christ, and drag them down. Outside of Christ 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' In him alone true and eternal joys are to be found; and we only begin to live when we live in, live on, live with, and live for him. 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.' The time spent in the brick kilns and by the flesh pots must be ignored. It is henceforth to be of no account, save that the remembrance thereof should ever and anon serve to quicken and deepen their sense of what divine grace had accomplished on their behalf."

Old Testament Support for New Testament Symbols

Eat Thy Bread, Drink Thy Wine

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."—Ecclesiastes 9:7

Carl Hagensick

Noting the finality of death, Solomon in this passage encourages the enjoyment of life while it is available. Yet his philosophy is distinctly different from that of the Epicurean: "Eat, drink, and be merry; for tomorrow we die." Rather he is recommending gaining the maximum from human experience while we are yet alive. His words are not that different from those of Jesus in John 9:4, 5, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

In Ecclesiastes 9:8-10 the writer advises wearing clothing of happiness, living joyfully with one's mate, and being usefully employed with those tasks which come to hand. He is not describing the life of the lazy sloven but the proper productive life of a worthy individual.

Bread and Wine

Bread and wine are frequently joined in the Old Testament as symbols of a full and complete life. They are pictures of hospitality (Jud. 19:19). They were traditional offerings to God (1 Sam. 10:3). They were blessings bestowed by a king (2 Sam. 6:19). They formed the main sustenance of life (2 Sam. 16:1, 2). They were features of a promised land (2Kings 18:32). The psalmist well describes their worth in Psalm 104:15, "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart."

The New Testament adds an entirely new dimension to these two symbols. They become the symbol of Christ's life and death. He himself introduces them in this new role at the last supper: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28).

In this study we will examine the connection between the Old Testament use of these terms and the significance given them in the New Testament.

The Passover

The God-given symbols of the ancient Passover rites in Israel were not bread and wine but bread and lamb, with bitter herbs. Wine was undoubtedly a part of the meal, for a beverage was an essential part of the meal. It is thought this traditional cup of wine is referred to in Luke 22:17 where it is distinguished from "the cup after supper." However it is not mentioned in Exodus 12, in the giving of the Passover law, and hence cannot be viewed as an element of the typical picture. When Jesus introduced the elements of the Memorial of his death after the Passover meal, in effect he maintained the picture of unleavened bread but substituted the symbol of wine for the Pascal lamb.

Melchizedek

The first usage of this combination of bread and wine is found in Genesis 14:18-20 when Abraham returns victoriously from delivering Lot from his captors. On his return he is met near Jerusalem by Melchizedek, the king of Salem. Of this we read: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Bread and wine are introduced as the symbols of the Melchizedek priesthood. It was prophesied that the Messiah would be of this priesthood: "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4). This theme is developed in the seventh chapter of Hebrews, where the author shows the superiority of this priesthood to that of Aaron. There he recounts the experience of Abraham and Melchizedek, showing that the great grandfather of Levi (and by implication, Levi also) considered Melchizedek the great high priest. He uses this argument to show that while Jesus could not, by lineage, lay claim to the priesthood of Aaron, he could claim an even higher priesthood, that of Melchizedek.

The fact that it is an "order" of priesthood shows that neither Melchizedek nor Jesus were destined to be the only ones of the order. While the "high priest" of this order is Jesus, his followers, his body, are also members of the same "order."

The superiority of this order to that of Aaron lies not only in the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. It was to be an order where succession was not based on genealogy: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:3). The expression "without father, without mother" is not to be taken in its most literal sense. Rather it is an idiom meaning that his parentage was not the cause of his succession. In an ancient list of Assyrian kings, a line is appended to one particular group of rulers: "all of these are without father and without mother."¹ This is further borne out in the Greek word translated "without descent." Instead of meaning "childless," Thayer's Lexicon defines the term: "of whose descent there is no record." The process of selecting this order is done, not by parentage, but by the selection of God himself.

The superiority of the Melchizedek order is also shown because neither the beginning nor end of his life is recorded. This leads to the conclusion that this priesthood is to be without end, "continually," forever, a permanent priesthood. The Melchizedek priesthood would not pass away as did the Aaronic when the Romans destroyed the genealogical records in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Joseph in Prison

The next time the Bible refers to the elements of bread and wine is in an Egyptian prison cell. In this instance we do not see the words "bread and wine," but two people who are directly related to these two products—a butler, or cupbearer, and a baker. The account is found in the fortieth chapter of Genesis, "And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the [same] place where Joseph was imprisoned" (Gen. 40: 2, 3, NAS).

In this incident we find that Joseph had been made a warden in the prison. The two imprisoned men each dreamed one night and were troubled over their dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams for them, predicting the future of the two men. He said to the cupbearer, "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house" (vs. 13, 14 KJV). For the baker, the prediction was far less rosy, "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee. And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants" (vs. 19, 20 KJV).

Here, as in other places in the life of Joseph, we see parallels between that noble life and the life of Jesus. As Joseph stood between the server of wine and the maker of bread, so Jesus at the last supper is found with the symbols of wine and bread. As the final judgment of the Lord was to come in three days time, at his resurrection; so the judgment of these two prisoners would come from the mouth of Pharaoh in three days time. As Jesus was to be hung on a cross, so the baker was to be hung on a tree, the first prototype of such an execution given in the Bible.

There is perhaps also another distinction between these two symbols that is shown in this story. The cupbearer is to live, while the baker is to die. When Jesus introduced the symbols of his Memorial to the disciples he used these words: "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:22-25).

The bread was his body. This he was soon to give for the life of the world. But the cup, which was his blood, he would drink with them "new in the kingdom of God." As the baker in the story of Joseph was to die, so the bread element in the symbols of Jesus was to be completed on the cross. As the cupbearer was to live, so the wine element of Jesus was to have renewed fruitage in the kingdom of God. There are remarkable parallels between the two events.

Wisdom Cries in the Streets

The eighth chapter of Proverbs is an ode to wisdom. But it is more than that. The wisdom mentioned here is personified in the person of the Logos, the Son of God. Of him it says, "The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth" (Prov. 8:22, 23 RSV; Cf. Rev. 3:14). Then, in poetic prose, the text proceeds to show the sheer delight of the Father and his Son in the creation of the earth.

This theme carries forward into the ninth chapter where wisdom interacts with the beings he has created. He appeals to them to forsake the paths of foolishness and vanity and follow him. His message to them is given in verses four to six, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding" (Prov. 9:4-6).

It is worth noting that the two words translated "understanding" in these texts come from two different Hebrew words. While the latter one is correctly translated, the first is from the Hebrew *leb*, usually translated "heart." The writer of Proverbs is not addressing his remarks to people devoid of comprehension, but to the same class Jesus refers to in the first of his beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). One of the definitions that the Lexicon of Brown, Driver, and Riggs gives for the word translated "simple" is "open minded." Thus, we suggest that Proverbs 9:4, 5 could well be translated, "Whoever is open minded [or naive, NAS], let him turn in here. To those who are poor in spirit she issues the invitation, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

With this preface, we can see once again the parallel between the symbols bread and wine in the Old Testament and the significance Jesus gives to them at the last supper.

Shortly before that event Jesus had been petitioned by the wife of Zebedee to permit her two sons, James and John, to sit at his side in the kingdom. He addressed them with a similar petition to that given in the Proverbs text, "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Matt. 20:22, 23).

This is the invitation he holds forth to his footstep followers in the Gospel age. He still says to those who are of a simple and open mind and who are poor in spirit, "Drink of my cup; eat of my bread; be baptized with my baptism; share in my sufferings that you may share in my glory." What a beautiful invitation! Dare any turn it down?

Eat and Drink with Joy

With such prospects how can we help but eat and drink with joy. As our theme text says, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works" (Eccl. 9:7). What a privilege it is to live in the time when such meager works that we do can be counted in with his great sacrifice. As the Apostle Paul expressed it, "At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, and in a day of salvation did I succor thee: behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2 ASV).

Returning to the wise man, we read in Ecclesiastes 9:8, "Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Although he is using the figures of white garments and an anointed head to express the joyfulness of the preceding verse, they are also apt figures to complete the concepts of partaking of the bread and the wine.

Along with the Christian's acceptance in his partaking of the bread and the wine, he is given the white garment of justification. This gift bears with it the responsibility of maintaining its whiteness, its purity. This he does by seeking to live a life in harmony with God's principles and being quick to seek forgiveness when he notes that he has fallen short of this ideal.

At the same time he receives an anointing, an authorization to preach God's word of peace and reconciliation to all men (Isa. 61:1-3). This anointing is not so much one he receives individually, but rather he comes under the anointing of his head, Christ Jesus. This is beautifully shown in the anointing of Aaron as high priest of Israel. It is to this picture that Psalms 133:1-3 refers: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

May the symbols of the Lord's body and his blood be an ever dearer memorial of the commitments we have made to follow in his footsteps, to drink of his cup, to eat of his bread, to maintain our justification, and to come under his anointing.

1. Arno Toebel, "*An Assyrian King List at Khorsabad*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1 (1942), pp. 247-306; 460-442; Vol. 2 (1941) pp. 56-93.

The Trial of Abraham

Where Is the Lamb?

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"—Genesis 22:7

Excerpted from a discourse by Robert Seklemian

The Lord God loved Abraham, and called him away from country and kindred. Abraham loved God, and obeyed him in all things, instantly and completely. God made many promises to Abraham and his seed. These promises were most generous and substantial and of wide scope. They involved such sweeping expressions as, "I shall make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12:2); "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3); "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Gen. 13:16); "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1); "Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; so shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5).

Jehovah God and Abraham conversed directly together as intimate friends. They talked freely and frankly and hid nothing. The Lord said on one occasion: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? FOR I KNOW HIM . . ." (Gen. 18:17-19) [emphasis added].

Yes, they knew each other well. It was a close acquaintance. So it was not altogether surprising that, one day, after God had made one of his promises to Abraham, that Abraham frankly said to God, "Lord God; what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (Gen. 15:2). In other words, "These promises you have so graciously given me presume descendants. How can you make of me a great nation if I have no children? How can my name be great if there is no son to perpetuate it? How can all the families of the earth be blessed in me if there is only my own brief lifespan in which to accomplish it. My wife, Sarah, is barren and cannot have children. Lord God, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless?" A Seed Promised

Then God told him plainly: "You shall indeed have a child, of your own flesh and of Sarah's, and you shall call his name Isaac." Then he gave him a most important promise: "I will establish my covenant with him [Isaac] for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him" (Gen. 17:19). The promised seed and all the blessings were to come through ISAAC—not through Eliezer, not through Ishmael, but through ISAAC.

In due time Isaac was born. He was the only child of Abraham by his beloved wife Sarah. An only child is always precious, but Isaac was doubly precious to Abraham and Sarah because he was born in their old age. They had wanted a child for so long and now it was here! They lavished all their love upon him. Hagar and Ishmael were sent away by God's

approval, and on that occasion God reiterated his promise: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12).

Abraham's joy was great. He now had that which he desired most. The most high God, the Creator and ruler of the universe was his intimate friend. He had great material wealth of silver and gold, flocks and herds, and servants. He had a devoted wife whom he loved dearly. And now he had a fine son who was the heir of all the wonderful promises that God had made to him, in whom was wrapped up the hope of the world! Isaac grew up to be a handsome lad, a delight to his father and mother, obedient and considerate, fully returning their great love for him. Life seemed perfect.

Orders to Kill

Then, one day, Abraham heard God's voice calling his name in the old familiar way. He loved these talks they had together. He eagerly answered: "Behold, here I am!" And God said (Gen. 22:1, 2), "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of." Abraham was stunned! He could scarcely believe his ears! This was a terrible thing that God was asking: to kill his own son! How it must have wrenched his heart. All his dreams and plans and high hopes came crashing down upon him. But, though he loved his son, as his own soul, he loved the Lord God with all his soul. There was no question about his obeying—no asking why or pleading with God; only prompt and complete obedience.

He probably could not bring himself to tell the boy's mother. He would want to spare her. Why cause her anguish before it was necessary? She would only protest and try to dissuade him, and that would only make things harder because he could not be dissuaded. After all, she could not know the Lord God as completely as he did—he who had frequent conversations with God.

So Abraham got up early in the morning, probably while Sarah was still asleep, to commence the three-day journey to Mount Moriah. First he may have cut wood for the sacrifice, and every blow of the axe would have cut his own heart. Then he asked his beloved son, Isaac, to accompany him on a trip into the wilderness to make a sacrifice to the Lord. Together with two household servants and a pack animal, they started out.

It must have been a heart-breaking journey for Abraham and his anguish of soul must have shown in his face and manner. It is said that man's greatest love is self-love and his strongest animal instinct is self-preservation. But the Bible tells us that a greater love than this is possible: to lay down one's life for a friend. Abraham's love for Isaac was undoubtedly of this superior quality, and this high degree of sensitivity would make his suffering even keener. Isaac must have noticed his father's burden, and, as a loving and dutiful son, must have been extra solicitous of his welfare, doing little things for his comfort on the journey.

The three days journey would give Abraham time to meditate and try to rationalize God's command, to reason things out. Although he was determined to obey without question, he would naturally try to find the answer in his own mind. Again and again he would go over the facts and try to evaluate them. And the essential facts were these: God had made him many promises which could be realized only through his seed or posterity; these promises were given before he had a son; finally, a son was born to him in a miraculous manner and he was told by God himself to name him Isaac; he was also told by God himself that this same Isaac was the seed through whom the promises must come; God's promises are absolutely certain of fulfillment and they must be fulfilled through Isaac; and now he was told to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering, to kill his only beloved son, and lay him on the wood of the altar, to set fire to the wood and burn the body to ashes! To put it simply: God had said Isaac would live to have children. Isaac did not, as yet, have children. Isaac was required to die before having children. These were the facts!

The Answer of Faith

To one lacking faith they made no sense. But Abraham had faith to a superlative degree, and to him there was only one answer, and that answer was clear: Isaac was to be raised from the dead!

This was an amazing conclusion to draw. At that time there was no precedent whatsoever. At that time no one had ever been raised from the dead. Now if one had believed such a thing in the days when Elisha awakened the widow's son (1 Kings 17:22), or at the time Elisha awakened the Shunamite's son (2 Kings 4:35), it would have been easier to believe that the dead could live again. Or if one had seen Jesus take the hand of Jairus' little dead daughter and gently raise her to life (Mark 5:42), it would have been a more natural conclusion to draw. Or if one had been with Jesus that day at Nain, when he took compassion upon a poor widow, whose only son lay in his coffin, and said "Weep not," as he delivered the boy alive into his mother's hungry arms (Luke 7:13); or that day in Bethany when Jesus himself wept, his tender heart responding to the grief of Mary and Martha, and then, with a mighty display of power he summoned four-day-dead Lazarus from the tomb (John 11:44); or if one had seen Jesus die in agony on the cross and then had the glorious experience of walking and talking with the same Jesus alive—we can conceive that one who had seen such things could believe that Isaac would be raised from the dead. But Abraham had no such examples to go by! Not one! He trod totally unexplored paths. By an absolute reliance upon God, by sheer unwavering faith, alone and unaided by any other human, he reached out beforehand and grasped the most staggering truth: "There shall be a resurrection from the dead."

On the third day of the journey they came within sight of the spot designated by God for the sacrifice. Halting the caravan and telling his servants to wait for them, Abraham took the bundle of wood he had brought for the burnt offering and loaded it upon the back of his son Isaac. Here is something which is ordinarily beyond our understanding. To make Isaac himself carry the wood by which his own body would be burned is an unappealing idea to us. The only way such an act could be justified is by Abraham's absolute belief

that all would be well, that no permanent harm would come to the boy, that there would be a resurrection, and that he would live again.

Abraham's Prophecy

Then Abraham took a knife and the urn of live coals saved from their last campfire and they started out. They would walk the last few steps alone together. But Isaac has a question to ask his father. "Father," he said. "Here am I, my son," Abraham answered. Then Isaac said, "Behold the fire, and the wood; but where is the lamb for the burnt offering." Then, with what sounded like an evasive answer but was really a grand prophecy, Abraham replied, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8).

"So they went, both of them together, and they came to the place God had told him of." What was so special about this particular place? Why had the Lord required them to journey three weary days to this wild and remote spot? The answer shows how perfectly God has laid his plans, with what minute detail he knows the end from the beginning. Long centuries afterward, in the time of Solomon, this spot probably became the site of the temple, and perhaps the place where Isaac was bound became the exact location of the Brazen Altar.

The Faith of Isaac

We read in Genesis 22:9, "And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood." Abraham bound Isaac his son. At this point Abraham could no longer keep his burdensome secret from Isaac. Why? Because Isaac could not be bound against his will! At this time Abraham was about 125 years old and Isaac was a vigorous young man in his twenties. In any case, Abraham would not want to bind Isaac against his will even if he had been physically able to do so. This was thus a trial, not only of Abraham's faith, but of Isaac's as well. This was Isaac's first recorded opportunity to make a decision for God, to demonstrate his worthiness to inherit the great promises of God by his submission to the will of God. Abraham undoubtedly revealed to Isaac the commandment he had received to offer him up as a burnt offering and, of course, he would also tell Isaac of the wonderful conclusion he had come to, of his unshakable faith that Isaac would be raised from the dead. As a loving, humble, dutiful son, Isaac completely submitted himself to his father's will and allowed himself to be bound upon the wood of the altar. Isaac's act of complete submission to his father, even unto death, stands as a brilliant jewel in recorded human experience.

The Supreme Test

Now came the supreme test of Abraham's obedience to God. With the altar made, the wood arranged in order upon it, with Isaac bound and laid upon the wood, the fateful moment could no longer be delayed, "And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took

the knife, to slay his son" (Gen. 22:10). From the human standpoint, what tragic words these are!

Then we read the next three verses, "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said: Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

Can you imagine the relief that Abraham must have felt? Even with his amazing faith the sorrowful load on his mind had been continuous and heavy for three days! Now it slipped away and his heart was filled with joy! Isaac had been as good as dead; and Abraham, instead of getting Isaac back literally from the dead as he had confidently expected to do, got him back figuratively from the dead. As it is summed up in Hebrews 11:17-19, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

God's Oath

When the ordeal was over the Lord spoke to Abraham again. Even ordinary speech from God is an awesome thing. When, during the Exodus, God sounded his voice from the mountain, the Israelites were terrified. They begged Moses to talk to God privately, and then speak to them, saying, "let not God speak to us, lest we die" (Exod. 20:19). The plain, unadorned word of God is firm and absolutely sure, and Abraham believed this above all men. It is written in Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void." But the way God spoke to Abraham now was not with ordinary speech. It was most extraordinary. On this occasion, God actually took an oath.

In old time courts of law, before testimony was taken, a witness was required to take an oath to swear to tell the truth. When he took this oath his hand rested upon the Bible, the word of God. Thus even the civil authorities tacitly admitted to the absolute truth and trustworthiness of God's word that there is no higher standard upon which to base an oath. Testimony given after such an oath was considered to be the truth and was so recorded. It ended all argument.

But if God's plain word is already the perfect standard of truth, then why did God on this occasion take an oath to support his word? No one asked him to. No one doubted his word. Abraham had amply demonstrated that he believed God. In fact, he believed God so thoroughly that it was "accounted to him for righteousness."

God was so pleased with Abraham, so delighted with his unquestioning obedience which even the perfect man Adam lacked, so gratified by his unshakable faith maintained under the severest test possible that he emphasized his word, his promise to Abraham, to the superlative degree, by his oath: "And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:15-18). Thus we find the great God of heaven making a covenant, an unconditional oath-bound covenant, with a man.

It is written that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). It follows then that with faith it is possible to please God. With the astounding faith Abraham displayed, it is possible to please God very much indeed! Not that we can ever attain the degree of faith Abraham had, but we can follow him in this matter (Heb. 6:12, 14, 16-19).

As we reflect upon the events associated with the time when Christ our Passover was crucified for us, let us also remember both Abraham's faith and his son's trust in his father and in his God. May we each continue to develop such a faith and trust.

News And Views

PBI News

Annual Meeting

The 1997 annual meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc. will be held on July 25, 1997, at Claremont College near Los Angeles, California. The meeting will precede the general convention of Bible Students which is to begin at the same location on July 26. Anyone desiring more information on the annual meeting, or the general convention, should contact the Institute Secretary, Michael Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. (310) 454-5248; E-mail: nekora@aol.com

New Secretary

Richard Evans has asked to be relieved from his secretarial duties for the Pastoral Bible Institute. The new secretary is now Michael Nekora. His address is given in the item above. The filling of booklet requests will be delayed until our supplies can be transferred to the new secretary. We ask for your understanding during any such delays.

The Herald on Tape

Each issue of **THE HERALD** magazine is now available on audio cassette tape at a cost of \$4 per issue (set of two tapes) or \$24 per year. Send in your order to the secretary of the PBI: Michael Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272 .

Bible Student News

Charles T. Russell Biography

Pastor Charles T. Russell's ministry ended just over 80 years ago. Since then virtually all who knew the Pastor have passed on. Even those who knew those who knew him are passing away.

In the past 20 to 30 years a new generation has come into the Bible Student movement who have heard little about the early work, the zeal, the dedication, the sacrifice, and the enthusiasm and excitement about the early years. As a result many have felt a bit detached from their heritage and others have believed the rumors published about Bro. Russell, while still others have grown lukewarm.

A group of brethren have begun to write a book about Bro. Russell's life and ministry and how the Bible Student movement came into being. The committee who will oversee the project are: Owen Kindig, Paul Mali, James Parkinson, Rolando Rodriguez, and David Stein. Among those providing assistance and advice to the project are: Carl Hagensick, Brian Kutscher, Michael Nekora, and David Rice.

If any of our readers have printed material, newspaper clippings, letters, stories, anecdotes, or pictures that relate to the period from the 1850's to the 1930's, the committee would be interested in receiving photo copies of these. Do not send originals and please enclose your address and phone number with each. Send these to C.T. Russell Biography, c/o Paul Mali, 638 Pequot Ave., New London, CT 06320.

Around the World

South Africa

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Cape Town asked American church leaders to devote the same effort they put into dismantling South Africa's apartheid regime into helping the nations of Africa and other Third World countries find relief from crippling foreign debts. Tutu recalled the biblical principle of Jubilee: All property that was sold or leased in the previous 49 years reverts back to its original owner every 50th year. "It is the biblical thing that says everything belongs to God. You acknowledge that by returning things to people to give them a chance of starting afresh. Those burdened by debt, you set them free. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank celebrated their Jubilee last year, and some of us said, "Hey, here is an opportunity for you! How about applying the Jubilee principle?" he concluded.

-EP, 12/31/96 President Nelson Mandela said his government would not tolerate extremist political groups which used violence to pursue their aims. He issued the statement as fear grew of increased racial and religious tension following a series of bomb attacks near Johannesburg and Cape Town. One of the bombs damaged the entrance to a mosque, indicating that it may have been aimed at Moslem People Against Gangsterism and Drugs. Mandela expressed fear that over-reaction to the bombings would continue to spark a spiral of counter-violence. The government under Mandela has been accused by world leaders of giving in to reactionary blackmail and abandoning the drive to change the country's policies with regard to housing, health, education, black empowerment and the narrowing of the apartheid wage gap

-Financial Times, 1/7/97

Algeria

Algerian guerrillas killed 18 people in a village 60 kilometers from Algiers. The massacre is part of a wave of resurgent violence under Ahmed Ouyahia, the prime minister. He insisted that terrorism had been defeated and had been reduced. However, the massacre in the village of Douaouda followed the killing of 16 people in Ben Achour, south of Algiers. The Islamic Salvation Army, armed wing of the Islamic Salvation Front, distanced itself from the killing, although it warned France and other western governments against lending financial support to the Algerian regime.

Geneva

Algerian News Agency, 1/6/97

Representatives from 140 countries gathered in November for a two-week meeting with the aim of strengthening a global pact banning biological weapons, amid warnings that the risks of germ warfare and terrorism are increasing. Since the last conference in 1991, Russia and Iraq have admitted to possessing biological arms and there are suspicions that development programs are continuing. Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese sect which used chemical agents in a deadly attack on a Tokyo subway last year, was also trying to develop a biological weapons capability. There are claims that it sent a team to Zaire to help with an Ebola outbreak in 1992 with the objective of collecting a sample of the virus. According to a 1993 report by the US intelligence, China, Iran and Syria also possess biological weapons and Egypt, Taiwan and Libya may have them.

-Financial Times 11/26/96

Russia

Iran will take delivery soon of its third Russianmade submarine, strengthening its control over oil export routes through the Gulf. The sale highlights how Russia is rapidly re-emerging as a serious force on the world arms market. Russia's defense minister, Zinovy Pak, confirmed that arms sales had exceeded \$3 billion in 1996 and predicted they would triple over the next few years. Western officials have grown increasingly alarmed at the willingness of former Soviet states to sell arms to unstable regions. "Russia currently appears to be cynically selling arms purely for financial reasons and there is little or no foreign policy input at all," said one western defense expert.

-Moscow News Bureau, London, 1/7/97

Science

Scientists at an underground laboratory are seeking clues to the fate of the universe. At the Gran Sasso Underground laboratory west of Rome, Germany's Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics is using inherently low radiation background to determine if subatomic particles called neutrinos have mass. If they do, their density could indicate whether the universe is expanding fast enough to prevent it from collapsing by crushing down on itself.

-Financial Times, 12/2/96

Christendom

The World Council of Churches has accused Nigeria's military regime of widespread oppression in oil-rich Ogoniland. The accusations were made in a 106 page report compiled by the organization following a visit last year to Nigeria, where nine Ogoni leaders were executed. "A quiet state of siege prevails even today on Ogoniland. Intimidation, rape, arrests, torture, shooting and looting by the soldiers continue to occur," says the report. During the 1900s, 170 million people have been killed by state action. This estimate excludes soldiers.

--Auschwitz: 1270 to Present, by Robert Jan van Pelt and Deborah Dwork

The Christian Coalition, a conservative Christian public policy organization, reported in December that it raised nearly \$27 million during 1996, an increase of 36 percent over the previous year. The funding comes from an estimated 1.3 million members. A major expense during the year was the preparation and distribution of an estimated 46 million voter guides for the November election in the U.S., distributed to some 126,000 churches. The organization has come into difficulty of late with the challenge of its tax-exempt status, because of its political position in dealing with issue-oriented voter education material.

Associated Press, 12/13/96

The Catholic Church is enjoying a new openness with the Communist nation of Cuba, and the Pope may soon consider a visit to the island nation.

Associated Press 11/17/96

Five of Great Britain's most eloquent preachers gathered recently in London for a "preach-off." The Rev. William Anderson, a 65-year-old Roman Catholic from Aberdeen, Scotland, won the Preacher of the Year **Award from the ecumenical College of Preachers**. The event is designed to raise preaching standards throughout Great Britain. Finalists were chosen through unannounced visits to churches, and participated in a final competition, delivering 10-minute sermons before a congregation and panel of judges. Anderson described his winning technique: "You need sincerity, clarity and one or two jokes. You have to make it light, otherwise boredom sets in."

-London press 12/31/96

Israel

Editor's note: Much has been written about the recent conflict of the Israelis and the Palestinians over the infamous tunnel incident in Jerusalem. Due to the daily change of events it is impossible to discuss much here and have it be current. We confine the comments to the one citation which follows, which seems to place the entire incident in its proper perspective.

The tunnel incident shook the Middle East peace process to its very foundations. The Western media portrayed Israel as a belligerent aggressor mutilating Palestinian rights. The United Nations also jumped on Israel for upsetting the peace process. The charge was that, by opening the tunnel into the Via Dolorosa in the Old City, Jews had threatened the foundations of al-Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount. Some media called it a "crime against Islam."

However, the opening of the tunnel represented no threat to the Mosque. The excavation was a narrow passage running along the base of the Western Wall outside the Temple Mount. The door that was opened on the Via Dolorosa was about as far from the al-Aqsa as a person can get within the Old City. In fact, some Arab shopkeepers near the new door were delighted, as it meant increased tourist traffic into the area.

It was obvious that the outburst was a carefully orchestrated event by the Palestinians. It started when a group of Muslim militants began dropping rocks and stones on the worshippers at the Western Wall. Then there was a firebomb which killed six Israelis at the small religious site at Nablus. Those responsible were not "children of the stones" as was reported by the press. These people were on a mission.

Although not reported by the press, it is well known that Muslims have been building a new mosque on the Temple Mount for about a year, at the area known as Solomon's Stables. When Muslim workers began building the mosque, they totally disregarded the fact that many Jewish artifacts under the Temple Mount would be compromised. The courts ordered them to stop the illegal construction. Muslim officials ignored the order and continued to build the new mosque. Although they expressed deep concern over the building, Jews did not take up arms or even attack the Muslims.

The real issue finally surfaced in the frustration of Palestinians over the administration's refusal to reward the Palestinians with more territory. That is the critical issue that Prime Minister Netanyahu asked the media to examine. He pleaded for them to get the facts before leaping to the conclusions to make deadlines. What they had flirted with was a holy war that all would pay for dearly. It appears that we could have been very close to great fire had not the new Prime Minister reigned in those who cried for retaliation.

*-derived from several sources, including "Israel, My Glory, "
December/January 1996/1997*

Jews who want to place a written prayer into a niche in Jerusalem's Western Wall can save themselves the airfare to Israel by filing a prayer through the Internet. The wall is the last remnant of the Jewish Temple destroyed in 70 A.D. Several years ago some enterprising Israeli created a "fax-a-prayer" service. Now the Virtual Jerusalem has taken the service to the next level by establishing a "send-a-prayer" site on the World Wide Web. Computer users can e-mail their prayers to the company, which prints them and takes them to the wall-all for free.

Associated Press 11/17/96

The problem of Jerusalem could be the trigger for a Middle East in turmoil, observes Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, the leading Egyptian commentator and former Nasser intimate. "The springboard for a new series of revolutions in the Arab world could come as only Arafat could surrender Jerusalem." "Don't open the religious issue," he says, "this will give new legitimacy and motivation to the Islamic fundamentalists in Palestine. The PLO holds the most important card in the Arab world because Palestine has Jerusalem in it."

-Jerusalem, by Dore Gold.

While Palestinian Arabs seek independence, Yasser Arafat is creating a centralized, inefficient and corrupt regime. Lacking legal and institutional constraints to secure human rights, the PLO is coming to resemble other middle Eastern regimes. It has been widely reported in the international press and by Arab human rights activists that the authority engages in kidnapping, torture and arbitrary arrests. Sixty percent of Gaza's population is under 19 years old. This has created hordes of unemployable young who are eager to join any fray for profit and fun, contributing to extremism and fanaticism, which the PLO channels against Israel.

-Wall Street Journal, 10.7/96

Israeli ultra-orthodox rabbis have been campaigning to remove Gil Kopatch, a popular comedian, from the radio. Mr. Kopatch has been giving a satirical interpretation of the weekly Bible reading recited in synagogues. The rabbis claim they have the monopoly over the interpretation of the Torah. They want the Israeli Broadcasting Authority to take away Mr. Kopatch's time slot. To make the Torah accessible, Mr. Kopatch uses slang and street language. Since the majority of Israeli Jews have not the time to study the Torah full time, the radio believes the comedian is filling a need. e .

-Financial Times, 12/96

Discovery is a fast-spreading religious seminar that purports to offer scientific proof that God exists. "I walked in a secular atheist and walked out believing that the Torah had been handed down by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, said Deborah Grayson, 24-year old graduate student at Columbia University. Discovery is put on by a nonprofit Jerusalem-based group of rabbis. Their mission is to persuade secular Jews to observe Judaism. They have put about 60,000 people worldwide through the seminar since 1987. Discovery teachers point to computer analysis of the Torah and say that God hid codes in the text to foretell future events. They treat the Torah like a word-search puzzle, looking at every other letter skipped or an equal number of places between letters.

-Wall Street Journal, 11/96

The Japanese company Marubeni Corporation may invest as much as \$300 million to build a cement plant in the Negev desert. The Tokyo-based company is attracted by the deposits of oil shale in the area.

-Bloomberg News Service, 1/6/97

Switzerland's government, faced with mounting pressure and threats by Jewish organizations to boycott Swiss banks, said it wants to speed up compensation for Holocaust victims. The Swiss banks have been under pressure for months to give more information about money that was transferred there after the Second World War. A joint commission set up by the Swiss Bankers' Association and Jewish organizations is led by former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker and is charged with investigating how much money belonging to Holocaust victims is still held by Swiss banks. Another commission is examining the accounts of the former Nazi regime, which purportedly transferred gold to the central bank of Switzerland following the Nazi demise. Last year, Union Bank of Switzerland Chairman Robert Studer described the amounts belonging to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust held by banks as "peanuts," causing outrage abroad and drawing criticism at home. Israel Singer, secretary general of the World Jewish Congress reported that a recently declassified document from 1946 showed that the Swiss held \$865 million worth of looted assets, including art, jewelry, and melted gold teeth of Holocaust victims.

Bloomberg Business News, London, 1/5/97, 1/7/9:

Book Review

Babylon, Revised Edition, by Joan Oates, Thames and Hudson, New York, 216 pages.

"Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and the Abominations of the Earth"-the description in Revelation reads, telling of the false Christian empire that John likens to the Universal Empire of Daniel's day. What was it about that empire that made it so comparable to the false church system that was established during the Gospel Age? It is not easy for Bible students to picture the lurid vision of Ancient Babylon given by John. This book will help. The ancient city known by the world for its Hanging Gardens-one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World-is probably best known by Bible readers as the place of Jewish exile which began with the captivity in 586 B.C. However, the prominent place John gives it in his prophetic utterance as the residing place of anti-Christ, should make all Bible Students eager to learn more about the ancient city, which modern day Iraq hopes to restore.

In this highly acclaimed account, brought up to date for the revised edition, Oates describes the rise of Babylon from Sargon of Agade to Hammurapi, the great law-giver under whom in the 18th century BC the city first attained pre-eminence. She charts the progress under his successors, and details the greatest period of the empire during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus in the 6th century BC. Of particular interest is the account of its decay and final abandonment as the Greeks and Persians turned Mesopotamia into a battleground. Serious students may find much material for comparable studies with the descriptions in Ezekiel and Revelation of the casting down of Babylon the Great at the end of the current age. Over 137 illustrations outline this complete history.

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