

1. 2 Kings 23:19-24:Yoshiyahu's reform

¹⁹Moreover, Josiah removed all the shrines of the high places that were in the towns of Samaria, which kings of Israel had made, provoking the Lord to anger; he did to them just as he had done at Bethel. ²⁰He slaughtered on the altars all the priests of the high places who were there, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

21 The king commanded all the people, 'Keep the passover to the Lord your God as prescribed in this book of the covenant.' ²²No such passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, even during all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah; ²³but in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this passover was kept to the Lord in Jerusalem.

24 Moreover, Josiah did away with the mediums, wizards, teraphim, idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah had found in the house of the Lord. (trans. NRSV)

2. Elephantine, Passover Letter, 419 BCE; Discovered in 1907

"The Passover Papyrus"

Sachau, 6; Date: 419 BCE

[To] my [brethren Yedo]niah and his colleagues the [J]ewish gar[rison], your brother Hanan[iah]. The welfare of my brothers may God [seek at all times]. Now, this year, the fifth year of King Darius, word was sent from the king to Arsa[m]es saying, "Authorize a festival of unleavened bread for the Jew[ish] garrison". So do you count fou[r]teen days of the month of Nisan and] obs[erve the passover], and from the 15th to the 21st day of [Nisan observe the festival of unleavened bread]. Be (ritually) clean and take heed. [Do n]o work [on the 15th or the 21st day, no]r drink [beer, nor eat] anything [in] which the[re is] leaven [from the 14th at] sundown until the 21st of Nis[an]. For seven days it shall not be seen among you. Do not br[ing it into your dwellings but seal (it) up between these date[s]. By order of King Darius. To] my brethren Yedoniah and the Jewish garrison, your brother Hanani[ah].

(<http://www.ancientneareast.net/elephantine-papyri/>)

3. Jubilees 49:

¹ Remember the commandment which the Lord commanded thee concerning the passover, that thou shouldst celebrate it in its season on the fourteenth of the first month, that thou shouldst kill it before it is evening, and that they should eat it by night on the evening of the fifteenth from the time of the setting of the sun. ² For on this night -the beginning of the festival and the beginning of the joy- ye were eating the passover in Egypt, when all the powers of Mastêmâ had been let loose to slay all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh to the first-born of the captive maid-servant in the mill, and to the cattle. ³ And this is the sign which the Lord gave them: Into every house on the lintels of which they saw the blood of a lamb of the first year, into (that) house they should not enter to slay, but should pass by (it), that all those should be saved that were in the house because the sign of the blood was on its lintels. ⁴ And the powers of the Lord did everything according as the Lord commanded them, and they passed by all the children of Israel, and the plague came not upon them to destroy from amongst them any soul either of cattle, or man, or dog.

⁵ And the plague was very grievous in Egypt, and there was no house in Egypt where there was not one dead, and weeping and lamentation. ⁶ And all Israel was eating the flesh of the paschal lamb, and drinking the wine, and was lauding, and blessing, and giving thanks to the Lord God of their fathers, and

was ready to go forth from under the yoke of Egypt, and from the evil bondage.

⁷ And remember thou this day all the days of thy life, and observe it from year to year all the days of thy life, once a year, on its day, according to all the law thereof, and do not adjourn (it) from day to day, or from month to month. ⁸ For it is an eternal ordinance, and engraven on the heavenly tablets regarding all the children of Israel that they should observe it every year on its day once a year, throughout all their generations; and there is no limit of days, for this is ordained for ever.

⁹ And the man who is free from uncleanness, and does not come to observe it on occasion of its day, so as to bring an acceptable offering before the Lord, and to eat and to drink before the Lord on the day of its festival, that man who is clean and close at hand shall be cut off: because he offered not the oblation of the Lord in its appointed season, he shall take the guilt upon himself. ¹⁰ Let the children of Israel come and observe the passover on the day of its fixed time, on the fourteenth day of the first month, between the evenings, from the third part of the day to the third part of the night, for two portions of the day are given to the light, and a third part to the evening. ¹¹ This is that which the Lord commanded thee that thou shouldst observe it between the evenings.

¹² And it is not permissible to slay it during any period of the light, but during the period bordering on the evening, and let them eat it at the time of the evening, until the third part of the night, and whatever is left over of all its flesh from the third part of the night and onwards, let them burn it with fire. ¹³ And they shall not cook it with water, nor shall they eat it raw, but roast on the fire: they shall eat it with diligence, its head with the inwards thereof and its feet they shall roast with fire, and not break any bone thereof; for of the children of Israel no bone shall be crushed.

¹⁴ For this reason the Lord commanded the children of Israel to observe the passover on the day of its fixed time, and they shall not break a bone thereof; for it is a festival day, and a day commanded, and there may be no passing over from day to day, and month to month, but on the day of its festival let it be observed. ¹⁵ And do thou command the children of Israel to observe the passover throughout their days, every year, once a year on the day of its fixed time, and it shall come for a memorial well pleasing before the Lord, and no plague shall come upon them to slay or to smite in that year in which they celebrate the passover in its season in every respect according to His command.

¹⁶ And they shall not eat it outside the sanctuary of the Lord, but before the sanctuary of the Lord, and all the people of the congregation of Israel shall celebrate it in its appointed season. ¹⁷ And every man who has come upon its day shall eat it in the sanctuary of your God before the Lord from twenty years old and upward; for thus is it written and ordained that they should eat it in the sanctuary of the Lord.

¹⁸ And when the children of Israel come into the land which they are to possess, into the land of Canaan, and set up the tabernacle of the Lord in the midst of the land in one of their tribes until the sanctuary of the Lord has been built in the land, let them come and celebrate the passover in the midst of the tabernacle of the Lord, and let them slay it before the Lord from year to year. ¹⁹ And in the days when the house has been built in the name of the Lord in the land of their inheritance, they shall go there and slay the passover in the evening, at sunset, at the third part of the day.

²⁰ And they shall offer its blood on the threshold of the altar, and shall place its fat on the fire which is upon the altar, and they shall eat its flesh roasted with fire in the court of the house which has been sanctified in the name of the Lord. ²¹ And they may not celebrate the passover in their cities, nor in any place save before the tabernacle of the Lord, or before His house where His name hath dwelt; and they

shall not go astray from the Lord.

²² And do thou, Moses, command the children of Israel to observe the ordinances of the passover, as it was commanded unto thee; declare thou unto them every year and the day of its days, and the festival of unleavened bread, that they should eat unleavened bread seven days, (and) that they should observe its festival, and that they bring an oblation every day during those seven days of joy before the Lord on the altar of your God. ²³ For ye celebrated this festival with haste when ye went forth from Egypt till ye entered into the wilderness of Shur; for on the shore of the sea ye completed it.

4. Philo, On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and Cain, 17.62-63:

XVI. The stream that issues through the mouth and tongue of the ill-controlled soul floods in wherever there are ears to hear. Some of these have spacious cisterns which retain the influx. Others, because the passages are narrow, cannot imbibe the stream, and the overflow pouring forth unchecked is dispersed in all directions, while to its surface rise and float the secret truths, and thus like a mass of flotsam our most precious treasures are borne away in the current. And therefore they, who became partakers in the lesser before the greater mysteries, judged wisely, as I think, for they “baked their dough which they brought out of Egypt into buried unleavened cakes” (Exod. xii. 39), that is, they kneaded the savage untamed passion with aid of reason that softened it as though it were food. And the method by which they softened it and wrought it to something better was revealed to them by divine inspiration, and they did not utter it aloud, but treasured it in silence. Their hearts were not lifted up by the revelation; rather they were bowed in submission, and all proud thoughts were humbled.

XVII. Let us then say nay to all hesitation, and present ourselves ever up-girded and ready to give thanks and honour to the Almighty. For we are bidden to keep the Passover, which is the passage from the life of the passions to the practice of virtue, “with our loins girded” ready for service. We must grip the material body of flesh, that is the sandals, with “our feet,” that stand firm and sure. We must bear “in our hands the staff” of discipline, to the end that we may walk without stumbling through all the business of life. Last of all we must eat our meal “in haste” (Exod. xii. 11). For it is no mortal passage, since it is called the passover of the Un-create and Immortal one. And right fitly is it so called, for there is no good thing which is not divine and is not of God.

5. Josephus

a. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 2.1.3 (4 BCE)

And now the feast of unleavened bread, which the Jews call Passover, came round; it is an occasion for the contribution of a multitude of sacrifices, and a vast crowd streamed in from the country for the ceremony.

The promoters of the mourning for the doctors stood in a body in the temple, procuring recruits for their faction. This alarmed Archelaus, who, wishing to prevent the contagion from spreading to the whole crowd, sent in a tribune in command of a cohort, with orders to restrain by force the ringleaders of the sedition. Indignant at the appearance of the troops, the whole crowd pelted them with stones; most of the cohort were killed, while their commander was wounded and escaped with difficulty. Then, as if nothing serious had happened, the rioters returned to their sacrifices. Archelaus, however, now felt that it would be impossible to restrain the mob without bloodshed, and let loose upon them his entire army, the infantry advancing in close order through the city, the cavalry by way of the plain. The soldiers falling unexpectedly upon the various parties busy with their sacrifices slew about three thousand of them and dispersed the remainder among the neighboring hills. The heralds of Archelaus followed and ordered everyone to return home; so they all

abandoned the festival and departed. = // Antiquities, 17.9.3

b. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 6.9.3. = 70 CE

Accordingly, on the occasion of the feast called Passover, at which they sacrifice from the ninth to the eleventh hour, and a little fraternity, as it were, gathers round each sacrifice, of not fewer than ten persons (feasting alone not being permitted), while the companies often include as many as twenty, the victims were counted and amounted to two hundred and fifty-five thousand six hundred; allowing an average of ten diners to each victim, we obtain a total of two million seven hundred thousand, all pure and holy. For those afflicted with leprosy or gonorrhoea, or menstruous women, or persons otherwise defiled were not permitted to partake of this sacrifice, nor yet any foreigners present for worship, and a large number of these assemble from abroad. But now the whole nation had been shut up by fate as in a prison, and the city when war encompassed it was packed with inhabitants. The victims thus outnumbered those of any previous visitation, human or divine. For when all those concealed underground had been either slain or made prisoners by the Romans, the victors instituted a search for those in the mines, and, tearing up the ground, slew all whom they met; here too were found upwards of two thousand dead, of whom some had been destroyed by their own, and some by one another's hands, but the greater number by famine. So horrible was the stench from the bodies which met the intruders, that many instantly withdrew, but others penetrated further through avarice, trampling over heaps of corpses; for many precious objects were found in these passages, and lucre legalized every expedient. (trans. LCL)

[cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11.4.8]