

## UNIT 23: PARTICIPATION IN THE PASSOVER (Exodus 12:40-51)

### INTRODUCTION <sup>1</sup>

#### Text and Textual Notes

**12:43** And Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover. No foreigner may<sup>2</sup> share in eating it.<sup>3</sup> **12:44** But every man’s servant that is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, he may eat, **12:45** A foreigner and a hired worker shall not eat of it. **12:46** It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not carry it about outside from one house to another. Neither shall you break a bone of it. **12:47** The congregation of Israel shall keep it.

**12:48** And when a stranger shall dwell<sup>4</sup> with you, and will keep the passover to

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<sup>1</sup> The section that concludes the chapter is a section of regulations pertaining to the Passover. The section begins at verse 43, but verses 40-42 forms a good setting for it. In this unit verses 43-45 belong together because they stress that a stranger and foreigner cannot eat. Verse 46 stands by itself, ruling that the meal must be eaten at home. Verses 47-49 instruct that the whole nation was to eat it. And verses 50, 51 record the obedience of Israel. The passage does not have a great deal of difficult material in it that is new that needs to be commented on, grammatically or theologically.

<sup>2</sup> This taken in the modal nuance of permission, reading that no foreigner is permitted to share in it.

<sup>3</sup> This is the partitive use of the *bet* preposition, expressing that the action extends to something and includes the idea of participation in it (GKC, par. 119m).

<sup>4</sup> Both the participle “the stranger” and the verb “shall dwell” are from the verb *gur*, which means “to sojourn, to dwell as an alien.” This reference then is to a foreigner who settles temporarily in the land. He is the protected foreigner; when he comes to another area where he does not have his clan to protect, he must come under the protection of the Law, or the people. If the “alien” is circumcised, he may have the passover (Driver, p. 104).

Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised,<sup>5</sup> and then let him come near and keep it, and he shall be as one who is born in the land<sup>6</sup>--for no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

**12:49** The same law shall apply<sup>7</sup> to him that is homeborn and to the stranger who dwells among you.

**12:50** So all the Israelites did just as Yahweh commanded Moses and Aaron--so did they. **12:51** And on that very day Yahweh brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their divisions.

### EXPOSITORY DEVELOPMENT

There follows a section of regulations pertaining to the Passover. one may simply start at verse 43, but it may prove helpful to go back and pick up verses 40-42 as a historical setting, at least for a prologue to the passage. There the text reports how after 430 years of sojourning in Egypt the Israelites went out. Thus, that night was a night to be remembered.

The passage concludes with a report that this was how Israel had done it. So these must be rules given to Moses that somehow were not included in the actual instructions, but now form a conclusion to the section.

Verses 43-45 must go together, for they stress that no stranger or foreigner may eat, but a circumcised, purchased slave may. Verse 46 stands by itself, ruling that the meal must be eaten in one house, and that no bone of the animal may be broken. Verses 47-49 instruct that the whole nation was to eat it, and that if a stranger were sojourning with them, he could eat so long as he was to be circumcised. The law applies equally to him and the homeborn. Then, verses 50, 51 form a conclusion, reporting that Israel obeyed these laws, and that God delivered them.

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<sup>5</sup> The infinitive absolute functions as the finite verb here; and “every male” could be either the object or the subject (see GKC, par. 113gg and 121a).

<sup>6</sup> *'ezrakh* refers to the native-born individual, the native Israelite as opposed to the “stranger, alien” (Driver, p. 104); see also W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 127, 210.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, “one law shall be to”

If I were dealing with this passage, I would use 40-42 as a prologue (the commemoration of deliverance) and 50, 51 as an epilogue (the compliance for deliverance). The message would be 43-49: ***Only those who conform to the stipulations of the covenant may participate in the celebration of deliverance (or, in the celebration of the benefits of the covenant)***. It may be best to take the passage topically from here, although it can be treated in order. First deal with who may not eat--the stranger, the foreigner, and the hired hand, which are listed in verses 43 and 45. Then deal with who must eat, the congregation (verse 47), the purchased and circumcised servant, and the sojourner (verse 48). Of course, you will have to distinguish the stranger from the sojourner. Then, finally, deal with how it was to be eaten (v. 46--do not omit the significance of broken bones).

All this could be a second major point between what I called the prologue and epilogue. This would yield a discussion of the observation of the deliverance, the participation in the observation (limited to those who comply), and then the benefits for those who participate in the covenant.

The points can be easily paralleled with the NT, but you will have to explain what our covenant stipulations and promises are, and who may participate in the celebration of the "exodus" (used in Mt. 17 of Jesus' death). Naturally the application would be to ensure compliance with the covenant's stipulations. Here circumcision forms a helpful link, for in the NT it is used of the sanctification process.

