

# Passover 2007

## Background: Exceptional Passovers

Only four specific instances of the passover are mentioned in the Old Testament history. Each of these exceptional passovers follows some significant renewal after a period of decline.

Passover	Preceding failure	Locus of defect	Preceding restoration
Jos 5:10-11, Joshua	Lack of circumcision of the tribes in the wilderness	Participants	Circumcision
2 Chr 30:1-18, Hezekiah	Apostasy of Ahaz (16 years)	Temple	Cleansing of temple
2 Chr 35:1-19; 2 Kings 23:21-23, Josiah	Apostasy of Manasseh and Amon (55 + 2 years)	Temple	Cleansing of temple, discovery of law
Ezr 6:19-20, Zerubbabel (anticipated in Ezek 45:21)	Captivity	Temple	Return, rebuilding of temple

Last year we considered Hezekiah's passover in 715 BC. This year, we consider Josiah's in 622, 93 years later.

This was truly an exceptional passover:

<sup>18</sup> And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The principles that made it so are important guidelines for our worship. We will trace seven of them:

- Encouragement, 2-6, which includes
  - discernment of qualified men
  - focus on priorities
  - obedience
  - a sense of responsibility for spiritual reproduction
- Enablement, 7-9, cf 30:24, Hezekiah.
- Execution of what they have undertaken, 10-16

## Exposition

### ***2-6, Encouragement of the Levites (2 Kings 23:21)***

**And he set the priests ... and encouraged them.**--His encouragement of the Levites involves several important features.

**3 [He] said unto the Levites.**--He focused his encouragement on **qualified men**. According to Num 4:3, 23, 30, the priests and Levites served only from age 30 to age 50. Thus after 57 years of corrupt rule under Manasseh and Amon, there would be no active priests left who had served under Hezekiah and experienced his reform. It would have been a mistake for Josiah to try to get apostate priests to lead his passover..

In spite of this, some Levites distinguished themselves in two ways. It was not enough for them to be of the family that God had chosen to minister about the holy things. In fact, it may have been the relatively menial position of the Levites, compared with the Priests, that led to them having a more humble and godly state of mind.

Josiah looked for two qualifications.

**that taught all Israel.**--First, like the church in identifying elders (1 Tim 3:2), he looked for men who were "apt to teach." In general, it was the role of the priests to teach (Mal

Malachi 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Recall how Ezra the priest

had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

But the Levites could also teach, as Jehoshaphat realized in 2 Chr 17:8,9, and apparently at this epoch the Levites had been less corrupted than the priests.

**which were holy unto the LORD.**--Second, he sought men who were holy, set apart, free from worldly corruption. Again, there is a clear parallel in the elders, who must be "blameless."

**Put the holy ark in the house ... serve now the Lord your God, and his people.**--His encouragement urged them to **focus** on the most important things. Commentators differ on whether the ark had been removed for repairs and they are here told to return it, or whether (Keil) the putting is mental: "don't be focused on carrying the ark any more." I think the latter is more to the point in the context. "In the days of Moses, your responsibility was menial. Now you have a higher task to carry out."

**4 And prepare yourselves ... according to the writing of David ... and according to the writing of Solomon ... (6) according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.**--He encourages them to **obedience**. This chapter is rife with expressions marking obedience—to the king, to prior kings, to the law of Moses. There are no fewer than nine such references in ch. 35: 4 (2x), 6, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, and 26 (summarizing Josiah's life). There are only 33 in all of Chronicles, and no other chapter has so many. The next is Hezekiah's dedication of the temple in 2 C 29 (4x), then Solomon's original dedication in 2 C 8 (3x). There are only seven such references in all of Hezekiah's reign.

v. 26 shows that this was a distinguishing characteristic of Josiah's entire life. It is probably the main reason that this passover was so exceptional.

**6 sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren.**--Finally, he encourages them to **spread** their ministry. The real payoff in encouraging people comes when they are able to encourage others. That leads to a self-sustaining chain reaction.

## 7-9, Enablement of the People

Next, he gave cattle to the people to **enable** them to offer sacrifices.

7 Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings

His example was followed by “his princes,” the “rulers of the house of God” (v. 8), and the “chief of the Levites” (v. 9).

He removed every obstacle that people could have had to worship the Lord. If they had a willing heart, nothing more was needed. They could not plead poverty.

When Moses installed the priests, he “filled their hands”(the literal sense of “consecrate” in Exod 28:41 and many other places), so that they would have something to offer. None of us is the real source of what we give to God. David realized this when he made provision for the temple.

1 Chr 29:14 But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

So it is very fitting for the leaders of the society here to give the people what they need in order to worship. And we should look for ways that we can enable others to worship the Lord.

## 10-16, Execution

Finally, they carried out the work for which Josiah had encouraged and enabled them. Too often we plan and prepare for something, but do not carry it out. Our Savior warned that those who set their hand to the plow and then look back are not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Josiah and his contemporaries were not guilty of that fault.

These verses are full of references to **obedience**, reminding us again of their care to follow the pattern that God had provided.

10 according to the king's commandment.

12 as *it is* written in the book of Moses.

13 according to the ordinance

15 according to the commandment of David

16 according to the commandment of king Josiah.

## 17-19 Summary (2 Kings 23:22-23)

So Josiah led the people in an unprecedented passover. His leadership was marked by

- **Encouragement**
  - of **qualified** men to
  - **focus** on the most important things,
  - **obey** the Scriptures, and
  - **spread** their dedication to others
- **Enablement** of the people, to remove every obstacle to their involvement, and
- **Execution**, faithfully carrying out the purpose that they had together undertaken.

# Notes

## Josiah's History

Josiah's history:

- Antecedents:
  - Hezekiah's reform, 2 Chr 29-32, 29 years, following Ahaz (a corrupt king)
  - Manasseh (55 years) and Amon (2 years) of base corruption
  - Ammon overthrown by a coup, the people then put his son Josiah on the throne at the age of 8.
- 7vv: 34:1-7, destroyed altars and idols
- 14vv: 34:8-21, purged temple, discovered book of the law
- 7vv: 34:22-28, prophecy of Huldah
- 5vv: 34:29-33, covenant renewal
- 19vv: 35:1-19, passover
- 8vv: 35:20-27, death and burial

In all, the passover occupies 19/60 vv, or nearly 1/3 of the record of his reign.

## Comparison with 2 Kings 23

2 Kings 23	2 Chr 35
<b>2 Kings 23:21-23</b> <sup>21</sup> And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as <i>it is</i> written in the book of this covenant.	
<sup>22</sup> Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;	<sup>18</sup> And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
<sup>23</sup> But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, <i>wherein</i> this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.	In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

## “According to the Commandment”, “As it is written”

Words to this effect appear 9x in 2 C 35 (3x in 2-6, 5x in 10-16, and 1x in the summary of Josiah's life in v. 26). How often do they appear in other chapters?

1 C 6: 1x

1 C 11: 2x (crowning David)

1 C 12: 1x

1 C 15: 1x

1 C 16: 1x

1 C 23: 1x  
1 C 25: 2x  
2 C 7: 1x  
2 C 8: 3x (dedication of temple under Solomon)  
23: 2x  
25: 1x  
29: 4x (Hezekiah's dedication)  
30: 2x (Hezekiah's passover)  
31: 1x  
33: 1x

So the nine references in ch. 35 really are extraordinary. This was a man concerned that things be done just so.

Things in 1,2 Chron said to be “according to the commandment”

1 C 6:49 But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, *and were appointed* for all the work of the *place* most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, **according to all that Moses** the servant of God had commanded.

1 C 11:3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, **according to the word of the LORD** by Samuel.

1 C 11:10 These also *are* the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, *and* with all Israel, to make him king, **according to the word of the LORD** concerning Israel.

1 C 12:23 And these *are* the numbers of the bands *that were* ready armed to the war, *and* came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, **according to the word of the LORD**.

1 C 15:15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, **as Moses commanded** according to the word of the LORD.

1 C 16:39-40 <sup>39</sup> And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that *was* at Gibeon, <sup>40</sup> To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and *to do* **according to all that is written** in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel;

1 C 23:31 <sup>31</sup> And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, **according to the order commanded unto them**, continually before the LORD:

1 C 25:2 <sup>2</sup> Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied **according to the order** of the king.

1 C 25:6 <sup>6</sup> All these *were* under the hands of their father for song *in* the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, **according to the king's order** to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

2 C 7:17 <sup>17</sup> And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do **according to all that I have commanded thee**, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;

2 C 8:12-15 <sup>12</sup> Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch, <sup>13</sup> Even after a certain rate every day, offering **according to the commandment of Moses**, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, *even* in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. <sup>14</sup> And he appointed, **according to the order of David** his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded. <sup>15</sup> And **they departed not from the commandment of the king** unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

2 C 23:8 <sup>8</sup>So the Levites and all Judah did **according to all things** that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go *out* on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses.

2 C 23:18 Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, **as it is written in the law of Moses**, with rejoicing and with singing, *as it was ordained* by David.

2 C 25:4 But he slew not their children, but *did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses*, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

2 C 29:15 <sup>15</sup> And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, **according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD**, to cleanse the house of the LORD.

2 C 29:25 <sup>25</sup> And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, **according to the commandment of David, and of Gad** the king's seer, **and Nathan** the prophet: for *so was the commandment of the LORD* by his prophets.

2 C 30:6 <sup>6</sup> So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and **according to the commandment of the king**, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

2 C 30:16 <sup>6</sup> And they stood in their place after their manner, **according to the law of Moses** the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, *which they received* of the hand of the Levites.

2 C 31:3 *He appointed* also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, *to wit*, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, **as it is written in the law of the LORD**.

2 C 33:8 <sup>8</sup> Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, **according to the whole law** and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.

2 C 34:32 <sup>32</sup> And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did **according to the covenant of God**, the God of their fathers.