

Bitter Herbs

Exodus Chapter 1 (cont.)

SLIDE: LIES

Good morning, saints.

The slide illustrates some of the blatant lies with which all of us are bombarded, most usually by politicians and advertising agencies. Two of the more recent ones are:

- If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor.
- You're going to save \$2,500 annually because of my plan.

We know now that both statements were lies and the people who make these statements knew it at the time they made them. Politicians...

Joke¹: After a long life, and a tumultuous marriage, Stan Goldberg (politician) dies and arrives at the Gates of Heaven, where he sees a huge wall of clocks behind him.

He asks an angel, "What are all those clocks?"

The angel answers, "Those are Lie-Clocks. Everyone on Earth has a Lie-Clock. Every time you lie the hands on your clock will move."

"Oh," says Herman, "whose clock is that?"

"That's Moses' clock. The hands have never moved, indicating that he never told a lie."

"Incredible," says Herman. "And whose clock is that one?"

The angel responds, "That's Abraham clock. The hands have moved twice, telling us that Abe told only two lies in his entire life."

"So where's my clock?" asks Herman.

"Your clock is in God's office. He's using it as a ceiling fan."

LIES ... well, today as we continue in the Book of Exodus, we're going to come across an incident where two midwives lie to the Pharaoh about why they did not kill Israelite newborns. And God ends up rewarding them.... Was that OK? And later on, we'll see God telling Moses to ask Pharaoh that they go out for 3 days to sacrifice, presumably to come back again (Ex. 3).

Does God condone lying in certain circumstances?

We'll get to that, but lies are not the *main* topic of this presentation. Before we get to that, ...

SLIDE: ROSH HASHANAH

Today at sundown starts **Rosh Hashanah**, the Jewish New Year.

Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the Jewish civil calendar, and it is the 1st day of the Jewish month of Tishri. Today begins a 10 day period of reflection and repentance leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Rosh Hashanah is said to be the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve.

Originally, this day was called the Feast of Trumpets and it is one of the seven festivals mandated in the Book of Leviticus. The name was changed sometime in the 2nd century to Rosh Hashanah.

Like we say “*Happy New Year*” on January 1st, Jews often say “*May you have a good and sweet year.*” Sweets are thought to symbolize wishes for a sweet new year and it's for this reason that Jews will often dip apples in honey on Rosh Hashanah. The reason why the word “sweet” is often added to the wish is that everything from God is “good” but it is not always “sweet”.

It seems as if I often end up presenting on a Jewish festival or important date in Jewish history – last time it was the Tisha B'Av, the 9th of Av (the great day of sadness), and today is Rosh Hashanah; I find this encouraging, because this schedule was not planned out by myself or by the elders for this purpose.

We're still in chapter One of Exodus with the Israelites existing under a cruel slavery, and the notion of everything from God is good but not sweet fits in well here, because...

SLIDE: BITTER HERBS

The title of this presentation is “**Bitter Herbs**”. “With bitter herbs they shall eat it.” (Exodus 12:18)

<Click> Q: What is the ‘IT’ that the statement is referencing, the ‘IT’ with which the people have to eat bitter herbs? It is the Passover lamb.

➤ The Passover lamb is to be eaten with bitter herbs.

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with **unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.** Exodus 12:5–8

WHY were they commanded to eat BITTER HERBS along with the lamb at a Passover meal? So that they would always remember

the hundreds of years of bitter slavery in Egypt and the deliverance by God according to His covenant.²

OK – Bitter Herbs symbolizing slavery and the Passover Lamb prefiguring Christ – nice and familiar topic, right? Probably heard it all before... well, it may not be as simple as it appears. We'll get to this in a moment.

UNIFIED BOOK

But first, I want to touch upon a topic that I briefly addressed in the 1st session on Exodus – and in the 1st session on Numbers --- and that is that **the Bible is a unified Book.**

- I like to present from the OT because I believe that it is crucially important to our walk as Christians, and the Christian church has downplayed the importance of the OT for centuries.

SLIDE: SCRIPTURES ARE INSPIRED

READ: Paul wrote to Timothy: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;"

You've probably have seen and heard this text numerous times; it has been used to refer to the importance of both the

OT and the NT Scriptures. But, but did you realize that when Paul wrote to Timothy here about all Scriptures being inspired and profitable for training in righteousness, **he was writing about the OT!**

When he wrote this letter to Timothy in 64 AD, there was no such thing as the New Testament portion of the Bible. Two of the gospels (Matthew and John), at least six of the epistles, and the Book of Revelation weren't even written yet³, and they certainly didn't receive widespread recognition as Scripture until later.* Paul was speaking only about the Torah, the writings, and the prophets – the Hebrew Bible.

Verses 14–15c: “**Continue** in what you have learned and have firmly believed, (1) knowing from whom you learned it and (2) how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which (3) are able to make you wise for salvation (4) through faith in Christ Jesus.”

“Don't leave the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures, Timothy, because they led you to Christ. It is true that you met Jesus by name in the testimony of Christian witnesses back in Lystra, but it was the holy writings that made gave you a spiritual wisdom to recognize him and receive him. The Scriptures prepared your mind and heart

* Although Peter considered Paul's writings to be scripture in 2 Peter 3:15,16

to see Jesus for who he is and to believe in him. Don't walk away from the writings that brought you to Christ.”⁴

It's easy to forget that the books of the OT – like Exodus – are the scriptures **that Jesus used** and quoted from. For example, when talking to some Sadducees who did not believe in a resurrection from the dead, Jesus said:

'... have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? **He is not the God of the dead, but of the living;** you are greatly mistaken." (Mark 12:26–27).

Jesus here is using what God said to Moses at the burning bush **1400 years earlier** TO REFUTE A FALSE TEACHING in His day. **Jesus held that the OT Scriptures – and like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – are alive.**

The two Testaments work together. You cannot separate them as the Christian church has attempted for centuries. **And the Author of both testaments is the same – the Holy Spirit. Since His role is always to point to Christ, then we should expect that the OT gives us insights to Jesus – and it does on every page.**

AND THAT'S WHY I SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT KNOWING AS MUCH AS WE CAN ABOUT THE OT IS SO VALUABLE.

- **The Bible is One Book.** It's pretty tough to understand a book by **starting in the middle**. We will get something out of it – but, just as likely, we may take the part we do see *in the wrong context*, and come to some conclusions that are several degrees off course.
- We see that with the **Jews** – by neglecting the NT, they only have HALF a Bible; half the Word of God, and totally miss the most important figure in history – the Messiah.
- We Christians HAVE the Messiah – THANK YOU JESUS – but when **Christians** subconsciously downplay the importance of the OT, they also only have HALF a Bible; we have the most important part – the identity of the Promised Savior – but we also have many false teachings that are easily contradicted in the OT.

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING

Now, just a bit more on this. I want to also comment on a point of Biblical interpretation that was raised by Owen Carey when he visited here this month. He stated – and I quote Owen

– “...never read the OT but in light of the NT... and (pay attention to) the context of the Scripture ...”⁵

❖ And these two principles are ABSOLUTELY TRUE.

Unfortunately, many people STOP there – (and I’m NOT implying that Owen does).

I say that many stop there because, when you look around the landscape, you all too frequently see Christian leaders who say that they hold to these two principals but are promoting **bogus and ever heretical doctrines**. The reason for this – imo – is that they **FORGET** the **OTHER basic principles** of Biblical interpretation.

- The Health and Wealth gospel, generational curses, the dominion theory and the teaching that “*today’s prophets and prophecies can be often wrong and yet still be kosher under the NT*” are just some recent examples of this neglect.

A THIRD and FUNDAMENTAL principle of Biblical interpretation that is called **the ANALOGY OF (THE) FAITH**. That is – **we are to interpret Scripture according to Scripture**.

- The supreme referee in interpreting the meaning of a particular verse in Scripture is the **OVERALL TEACHING of the Bible**.

Westminster Confession states this concept as: *“The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of **any** scripture, it must be searched and known by **other places that speak more clearly.**”*⁶

- This is *precisely* why Jesus DIDN'T fall for Satan's *deceptive* quoting of Scripture during His forty days of temptation in the wilderness – Satan's suggested interpretations weren't consistent with the **WHOLE** context of Scripture.

And there is an increasing tendency among Charismatic churches to **DOWNPLAY OR ALMOST ABANDON** Scripture's authority and instead open themselves up to **new revelations** and understandings from the Holy Spirit.

One such leader is Bill Johnson, who pastors Bethel church in Redding California – it has an average weekly attendance of approximately 8,700 (8,684) and a yearly operating budget of over \$9 million⁷. He wrote a book entitled *When Heaven Invades Earth* in which he states that – and I quote –

*“...to follow Him (he's talking about the Holy Spirit), (to follow Him,) we must be willing to follow **off the map**—to go beyond what we know”.*⁸

The “map” here is the Bible. When he says – “Willing to ‘go off the map’” – he means that you must be willing to abandon Biblical teachings if you want to hear the **NEW REVELATIONS AND INSIGHTS** that the Spirit is giving today. [Pilgrim’s Progress, Pilgrim went off the road and ended up in the castle of Doubt and tortured by Giant despair.]

Johnson is not alone in this position – I could name a dozen or more leaders who hold this opinion. Supposedly, the fact that we don’t do so is the reason why there are so few miracles today is adherence to Scripture:

“It’s difficult to expect the same fruit of the early church when we value a book they didn’t have MORE THAN the Holy Spirit they did have. It’s not Father, Son and Holy Bible.”⁹ (emphasis added)

- This is a diabolical STATEMENT – its purpose is to remove ANY Scriptural check on his false teachings.

The Bible is not the Third Person of the Trinity and Christians do NOT worship the Bible any more than birdwatchers worship BINOCULARS; it is an instrument that helps us to see Jesus better.

However, the Third Person of the Trinity DID write the Bible; and He will NOT contradict Himself in new revelations.

*“If the Scriptures be (are) what they claim to be, the word of God, they are the work of **one** mind, and that mind **divine**. From this it follows that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. **God cannot teach in one place anything which is inconsistent with what He teaches in another**. Hence Scripture must explain Scripture.”¹⁰*

But what this supposed pastor and leader teaches here about the absolute authority Scripture is directly contrary to what St. Paul says to Timothy in the text on the screen. Paul states that the Scriptures determine correct doctrine – all new teachings and claims must be tested by Scripture. Paul could have written this individual’s name in here, when in this SAME letter, Paul states **WHY** Timothy needs to keep vigilant ...

SLIDE: DANGERS

“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.” (2 Tim 4:3)

My bottom line is that we can better protect ourselves from such wolves in the church and, at the same time, have a better understanding of Who Jesus is, what He had done and the nature of the Holy Spirit because of proper OT context.

Is everyone OK? Now, I know some may object to me mentioning him by name[†], especially if you like the Bethel Music ministry.

Maybe we can talk after the service if any wants to.

THE EXODUS PERSECUTION

OK – Let's continue in Exodus Chapter 1 with the story of two midwives and how they mislead the Pharaoh.

Exodus 1:7-22

"... the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land." 11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they

[†] Paul mentioned people by name. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." (2 Timothy 4:14)

multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel...

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; and he said, 'When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a **son**, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a **daughter**, then she shall live.' But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them.' So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.'"

SLIDE: A NEW KING

As we saw, a new Pharaoh rose to the throne. He was a native Egyptian and thus a descendent of the line of **Ham**, Noah's third son. He had overthrown the reigning Hyksos dynasty – Semite rulers who had conquered Lower Egypt.

Semites, as you may remember, were descended from Noah's first son **Shem**, and the Israelites were also Semites. Being a native Egyptian, the new Pharaoh naturally feared the Israelites because they also were Semites. They mostly lived in Goshen on Egypt's north-eastern border – thus a potential 5th column if other Semites decided to invade again. And they continued to multiply.

- So, the new Pharaoh feared the Israelites for national security reasons.
- The average Egyptian also disliked the Israelites but for a **completely different reason** – which we'll discuss in a minute.

The Pharaoh's solution to the Israelite population explosion was to enslave them, to 'afflict them with hard labor'. He didn't want them to leave altogether, as they were valuable to the economy and now were used as the nation's civilian labor force. They were conscripted into work gangs to construct buildings and military outposts, maintain a vast network of canals and water reservoirs, and to build roads. And the hard work supposedly would help to keep their numbers down. The Pharaoh's plan worked – in part – the war-torn nation begins to rebuild but the number of Israelites continues to increase.

The harder he works them, the more numerous they become. And, the more children the Israelites produce, the more paranoid it makes Pharaoh.

There are two of the God-patterns at work here. First: the more you persecute God's people, the more fruitful they will become. Israel never grew more and faster, and the Church never grew more and faster, than when under the worst persecutions. As far as today is concerned, when the Church *"take(s) the easy road, to look more and more like the world so we avoid persecution for our identity with Jesus, the less fruitful we will be. So it has been, and so it will forever be. It's simply the way God's economy works, and we have no ability to alter it."*¹¹

Second: Behind the scenes, there is an unseen POWER at work. God will have the final word here. Pharaoh may THINK that he is in control, but as the story of exodus unfolds, we will see that God Alone is ultimately Judge, Lord and Savior.

MIDWIVES

So – the Pharaoh's 1st strategy was to dampen the population growth with hard work, and it does not work. The harder he works them, the more kids they have. He becomes

increasingly paranoid and so tries a 2nd approach: he orders the two midwives to the Hebrews to secretly murder all male Hebrew newborns.

Let's look at this incident.

SLIDE: MIDWIVES

The text mentions '**birthstool**' in verse 16. According to Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word here means "*a pair of stones.*"¹² A birth stool was simply two bricks (or stones) placed under the buttock of the woman in labor. With the help of gravity, the mother could push out her baby into the hands of the midwives.

So, the mother would be sitting during the delivery, not lying down. "*Birthing while lying down is a relatively modern innovation, and in many ways is more beneficial for the attending doctor or midwife than for the pregnant woman herself. A squatting or seated position better facilitates a mother's own power to birth, in that it allows the pelvic floor muscles to stretch more easily and allows the woman to use her thigh muscles along with her abdominal muscles and uterus in a way that does not fight gravity. A birthing stool was frequently employed in this process, since it helped support the mother during labor.*"¹³

The Pharaoh's instruction to the midwives was that if the child was a **son**, you shall kill him, and if a daughter, let her live. According to the Hebrew lexicon, the word here is 'ben', which means '*son*'.¹⁴ Some translations, such as the New International Version and the New Living Translation, do not use the word "*son*" but substitute the word "*boy*".

Some might say – what's the difference? Both indicate that it was the male children that were to be killed. The difference is that **describing the child as a 'son'** better displays the absolute anguish of the mothers – the baby is a '**SON**', not just a 'boy'. Substituting the word 'boy' or 'male' somewhat **SANITIZES THE HORROR** of what was happening.

- It's like **PLANNED PARENTHOOD** referring to the aborted baby as "*tissue*" or "*the product of conception*". **PP tries to mask the PERSONHOOD** of the baby, and thus the killing doesn't sound as gruesome because the personhood aspect of the child is eliminated.

"Hebrew midwives" – The text says that they were '*Hebrew midwives*'. According to Hebrew scholars, this wording is a somewhat ambiguous, as it could either mean "midwives who were Hebrew", or it could mean "midwives TO the Hebrews".

Some like Josephus believe that these midwives were Egyptian¹⁵, some believe they were Hebrews, but many scholars doubt that they were either Egyptian or Hebrew.

As we saw last time, native Egyptians despised the Israelites because they were shepherds, so the change that they were native Egyptians is doubtful. And, it is unimaginable that the Pharaoh would have been so dumb as to expect Hebrew midwives to kill Hebrew newborns. [And, since native Egyptians wanted nothing to do with the Hebrews, it's hard to imagine that a pregnant Egyptian woman would ask for a Hebrew midwife.] So, it's probable that there two women – Shifra and Pu'a – were Semite women, but not Hebrew [remember, the Hyksos also were Semites but not Hebrews.] Their names are of Semite origin, but they are not Hebrew names.

The Pharaoh tells them that when you assist the deliveries of the Hebrew women, and you see the children on the birthstones, if it's a son, kill it.

As commentators like Ibn Ezra explain, this means to kill it **secretly**. After the midwife had done the deed, she'd say something like, *oh my goodness, I don't know if this baby is breathing*. Then you just hand the baby to the mother and she would take the baby to her bosom, to see if she could get it to nurse. The baby wouldn't nurse. Then the mother would have to recognize that the baby is dead, **and everyone would expect**

that it must have been a stillborn. But this, of course, was a great lie.¹⁶ The truth was, the baby wasn't a stillborn, it was alive, but it was then suffocated. An Egyptian example of partial-birth abortion.

The midwives, “*fearing God*”, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the male babies live. Since these were probably *not* Hebrew women, it’s interesting to me that they feared God. How did they know the God of the Israelites? Did they hear about Him from the pregnant Hebrew women? Or was it that some inner sense that what they were doing was wrong? We don’t know, but if the latter, it addresses the old question of what happens to someone who dies never having heard the Gospel. ***Somehow they knew, and knew that they were responsible to obey God.***

Q: Only two women are mentioned here as midwives. How could just two midwives assist in the hundreds of Hebrew births every week? Remember, they were about 3 million people when they left Egypt. Well, several theories are put forth:

1. These two women were the leaders of a midwife guild that comprised hundreds of women. When the Pharaoh dealt with them, they were to pass his orders along to their subordinates.

2. They might have been just two among many and were singled out because of **their virtue in fearing God more than they feared Pharaoh.**
3. The third possibility is that these two women were midwives to the Hebrews *in the capital city Avaris*. The more educated Hebrews would probably live in or near the capital, and so their children would be the upper class, the potential leaders of the Hebrews. **If Pharaoh could exterminate the future leaders, then he would have less trouble with the rest.**¹⁷

I actually think that this is more likely. It is highly improbable that such a widespread conspiracy to defy the Pharaoh could have remained a secret among the hundreds of members in the guild.

So, 80 years before Moses and Aaron challenged a Pharaoh, two midwives defied an earlier Pharaoh's order. They were engaged in what might be called **civil disobedience**. Rabbinic scholar David Daube calls the midwives' refusal **"the oldest record in world literature of the spurning of a governmental decree"**¹⁸

I find it humorous in a way that the Pharaoh feared the male children. **It was the WOMEN Pharaoh should have feared.**

- Without these women, you do not have Moses, because he would have been killed at birth.
- Without their comments to Pharaoh, he would not have ordered the boys to be thrown into the Nile. He might have grown up as just another slave rather than in the palace of Pharaoh.
- Without these women, you do not have the Exodus, David, Christ.

*** It's also interesting that the names of the Pharaohs in Exodus are never mentioned – the text just calls them by their title 'Pharaoh'. But the names of the midwives who refused to kill the babies ARE included in Holy Scripture –

> those who catch God's eye are not necessarily the same ones that catch OUR eye!

SLIDE: The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them.' So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.

<click> When Pharaoh confronts the midwives about so many male children being born alive, they offered an excuse, claiming that

Hebrew women are “*vigorous*” and thus give birth before the midwives even show up, unlike Egyptian women.

<click> The Rabbis say that it is somewhat unclear as to word Moses intended the word – translated here as *vigorous* – to convey. The Hebrew word here is 'chayoth'¹⁹ (pronounced KAYoth). There are two possibilities as to what the word means: If it is used as an adjective, then it means *lively, vigorous*. But if it is used as a NOUN, it can also refer to ‘*animals*’.

USING HEBREW–GREEK WORDS

Now, another brief aside – when I mention a specific Hebrew word, I often feel a need to acknowledge that:

- I DON'T PRETEND to know Hebrew. Like I have said before, I can swear at you in French and bless you in Latin, but I do not know the Hebrew language. So, I PROMISE that when I mention a Hebrew word, I will use ONLY the historic interpretation for that word that is agreed upon by consensus of Jewish scholars, not some outlier rabbi or hypothetical opinion.
- And, so that you hold me accountable, I put ALL the text of my presentations in pdf form on the church website; it

will contain footnotes documenting the Hebrew word's consensus interpretation, so you can check it out.

I've mention this because a lot of people nowadays like quoting Greek or Hebrew words with gusto when giving a teaching, especially a teaching with a new twist that occasionally conflicts with the historic Christian understanding of the passage.

Well – when you quote another language, it certainly lends an atmosphere of scholarship and proper breeding to the speaker. But unless that person actually has a degree in NT Greek or OT Hebrew, then **it's often being done either “for show” or in order to lessen the potential for challenge to the teaching. – Sorry to say but that's my opinion.**

So, back to this particular Hebrew word. Scholars say that the word here may be taken as either an adjective – meaning ‘*vigorous*’ or as a noun meaning ‘*animals*’. If it was actually meant as a noun rather than an adjective, then the midwives would essentially have said to Pharaoh: “*The Hebrew women are not human; they are animals, and do not need a midwife.”*”

- Such an INSULT to Hebrew womanhood probably **echoed the general Egyptian attitude toward the Hebrews**, and probably this is why the Pharaoh evidently did not distrust the midwives' statement.²⁰

MAGI ALSO DISOBEYED GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY

I find the midwife incident somewhat similar to the future incident with the **Magi** at Bethlehem.

- In a sense, the Magi were Gentile *midwives* – the first Gentiles to welcome the savior into the world.
- Matthew 2:7 says that Herod “**secretly**” called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared, so he didn’t want to call attention to what was happening, just like Pharaoh wanted the midwives to **secretly** kill the male babies.
- The Magi disobeyed Pharaoh by not returning to him and instead left by another route.
- Herod, frustrated at the failure of this *silent* attempt to eliminate the Christ-child, then resorted to *outright* murder of the male children in Bethlehem; this mirrors the reaction of the Pharaoh to throw the male infants into the Nile after the midwife scenario did not work.

The text notes that God rewarded the two women with “houses”, presumably a reference to offspring and/or material success.

- **Did God reward them for lying?**

Good question. Instead of lying to the mothers about the deaths of their babies, they lied to Pharaoh – or at least they did not tell the entire truth. And God rewarded them!

<click>: FEARED GOD

- No – God favored them, not because they had misled Pharaoh but because they feared Him (Ex. 1:21).

OK TO LIE?

We're going to see several examples in Exodus where God *appears* to support the telling of *less-than-totally-truthful* statements. We have the example of the midwives here, but there's a more striking example in Exodus Chapter 3, where God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask that he let the people go for a three day's journey in the wilderness to sacrifice to Him (Exodus 3:18–19).

- Certainly this was not the extent of the intended Exodus – a three day journey, a sacrifice and then come back.
 - What's going on?

SLIDE: DOES THIS DRESS MAKE ME LOOK FAT?

There was a GIECO commercial that came out a few years ago, with Abe Lincoln and his wife getting ready for a ball. She asks him, “*Does this dress make my backside look big?*” Honest Abe hesitates an incriminating second or two and then holds up two fingers and he admits that perhaps it is a tad too large. Mary Lincoln marches out in a huff. **Lincoln is still ‘Honest Abe’ but he is now in the doghouse.**

- Was that a wise decision on his part? Must we always tell the complete truth?

Some argue that what the midwives told Pharaoh was not an outright lie – the women offered *some* truth: the society obviously did consider Hebrew women as being stronger than Egyptian women, otherwise the Pharaoh would have immediately seen thru their deceit. The midwives just changed the subject and hoped that the Pharaoh wouldn’t notice – and he didn’t. But still – this was not the WHOLE truth.

“DOES GOD CONDONE LYING?”

The Bible declares that “the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Rom. 13:1). The Scripture also says, “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 12:22).

The Pharaoh had given a direct order to the midwives to murder the newborn Hebrew sons. The midwives disobeyed

that order and misled him about their deliberate disobedience. How could God bless the midwives for disobedience and lying to appointed authorities?

We've had a somewhat similar situation in recent time, haven't we? In WW2, when the Gestapo was going door to door trying to find Jews who were hiding, some who were hiding them lied to the agents of the state. The Nazis were the established authority, and we are to respect authority. We know that lying is a sin, but so too is murder. How would God feel about THESE people who were lying to the government?

- Are there moral ethics that guide the human conscience about when it is permissible and not permissible to lie? Are we to ALWAYS tell the truth?

Bible scholar and theologian R.C. Sproul notes that the story of the midwives gives insight into the ethics of truth: "*We are always and everywhere obligated to tell the truth **TO WHOM THE TRUTH IS DUE.** We are to speak the truth where justice and righteousness **REQUIRES** the truth.*"²¹ To Whom the Truth is Due!

- a murderer does not have the right to be told the truth in the pursuit of his crime.

The higher moral good outweighs the bad of doing something else that is exponentially more evil. In this

situation with the midwives, being righteous before the face of God REQUIRED that a **murderer be deceived**.

- **Remember RAHAB.** Rahab, the Canaanite woman in Jericho. Rahab lied to the King of Jericho in order to protect the lives of the Israelite spies who she hid. The King of Jericho was the enemy of God's people, and so it was the duty of the godly to oppose him, even if it meant Rahab had to lie. **And like the midwives, Rahab also was blessed in the establishment of a HOUSEHOLD – she became an ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).**

Remember when Jesus said... "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Mark 12:17

God commands us to pray for and obey the governmental powers, but He also commands us not to murder (Ex. 20:13) **There is a point at which the godly response to the state is to disobey its orders.** The saving of INNOCENT lives in this case is a higher obligation than obedience to government. When the government commands us to murder innocent victims, we should not obey. God did not hold the midwives responsible, nor would He hold us responsible, for refusing to follow our civil obligation to state in order to obey a higher spiritual obligation to God.

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19–20).

Of course, this concept can open up the argument that chaos will ensue if I myself can morally decide whether or not a person is ENTITLED to hear the truth.

- It is not always a simple matter to determine whether the laws of a state actually forbid what God commands or commands what God forbids.

And, unfortunately, the times when such a situation arises is increasing in today's society. Nevertheless, the principle of obeying the Creator before the state remains. Christ is Lord over the state.

RESENTMENT AGAINST JOSEPH

Back to the Pharaoh. The new Pharaoh's anxiety about the growing population of Hebrews is understandable. But WHY did the NATIVE Egyptians – the COMMON people in the streets – turn against the Israelites? And turn they did – remember, after the midwives scenario failed, the Pharaoh ordered that the Egyptian people to have the Israelite male

newborns thrown into the Nile. This order was carried out with or by their Egyptian neighbors.

SLIDE: EGYPTIAN PEOPLE AND HEBREW 'SONS'

“Then Pharaoh commanded **all his people**, saying, “Every son who is born **you** are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter **you** are to keep alive.” Exodus 1:22

So, the Israelites' Egyptian neighbors were charged with pinpointing newborn Hebrew males. It is now THEIR responsibility to do something about it.

Now, the average Egyptian probably didn't take the infant from its mother and throw it in the river, any more than the average German civilian in WWII wandered around killing Jews. Rather, they would have reported it to government authorities that had people assigned to come and take the newborn.

➤ Early example of “*See something, say something.*”

And they complied!

But WHY did they do it? Why COULD they do it?

➤ Even though we may not like our neighbor's loud rap music or the 15 'Vote for Hillary' signs on their front lawn, turning them into the government that would take their baby and kill it is probably not moral behavior. .

Well – the answer why they did it is twofold: 1) some did it out of **FEAR** of the government and 2) some did it out of an underlying issue of **RACISM** and of **CLASS ENVY**.

The first is somewhat understandable – you want to protect your own life and that of your family, so undoubtedly some people would fold under pressure. But, the 2nd reason was more pernicious because it reduced the Jews to less than WORTHY of protection – and that reason was CLASS ENVY.

SLIDE: Grapes of Wrath RESENTMENT

The reason for this resentment begins many years earlier, just after a previous Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of preparing for the coming famine after he (Joseph) interpreted Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph had the Egyptians take part of the produce of the land during the seven years of abundance and put it into Pharaoh's storehouses so the cities will have food during the famine.

I'm reading from Genesis chapter [41](#), starting at verse 46:

And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. So he

gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure... While the famine was over all the earth, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians. The famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. People from every country came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because the famine was severe throughout the earth. Genesis 41:46–49, 56–57

So, during the seven years of plenty, Joseph has a large part of the grain harvest commandeered and put into the Pharaoh's storage cities. **Then, the famine struck.** I'll pick up the story in Genesis chapter [47](#):

Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. **When the money was all spent** in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone." Then Joseph said, "Give up your livestock, and I will give you food for your **livestock**, since your money is gone." So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them

food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."

So Joseph **bought all the land** of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. **Thus the land became Pharaoh's**. As for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land.

Then Joseph said to the people, "Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, **here is seed for you, and you may sow the land. At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh**, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones." So they said, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and **we will be Pharaoh's slaves**." Joseph made it

a statute concerning the land of Egypt valid to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's." Genesis 47:13–26

Quite a story! The famine hits just as Joseph predicted. After a little while, the Egyptians begin to run out of food, and stored-up grain is sold to the people to prevent starvation. So, **the grain – which you will remember was confiscated by Joseph – was not *given away*** – it was ***SOLD*** back to the people who originally grew it.

Eventually, the people ran out of money, and they came to Joseph and said – we're broke and we're hungry. Joseph says – OK, I'll trade you grain for **livestock** – so the people gave up their starving cattle (they couldn't feed them anyway) in exchange for grain. Ok for a little while, but next year, the Egyptian people ran out of livestock to trade, and they come again to Joseph and offer to trade their **land** and then eventually their **servitude** in exchange for keeping their families from starving. In this way, Pharaoh eventually owned all the land and all the wealth of Egypt (except for that of the Egyptian priesthood's lands).

- So... the government had confiscated the grain from the people during years of abundance and sold the people's own grain back to them! – Typical government bureaucratic thinking!

<click> At first, the Egyptians probably grumbled at having to give some of their grain to the government during the years of plenty, but then they undoubtedly were grateful that there was grain available when the famine hit. But, as the years past, they eventually turned over all their **money** to the government, then **their livestock**, then their **land**, and then **their freedom**.

Then, the famine is over. The Nile again overflows its banks and the land become fertile again – but, the people didn't own their farms anymore and even if they did, they had no seeds to plant. So, Joseph offers them some of the stored grain- which was originally their OWN grain – as seed crop IF they agree to become **tenant farmers** on what was once their own land and agreed to pay Pharaoh 20% of their harvest.

➤ **And – Joseph was the face of that misery.**

Pharaoh had made Joseph the **FRONT MAN**. When the people turned over *their* money, then *their* livestock, then *their* land and finally their freedom, **Joseph** was the official sitting behind the desk (Genesis 41:44). Like all politicians, Pharaoh had put someone between himself and the people. If things go well, the politician jumps to the front to accept the credit and the adoration of the people. But, when something goes wrong, the politician goes on vacation and the front man is thrown under the bus.

SLIDE: GOSHEN

And, adding fuel to the fire, the lands in Goshen were not hard-hit by the famine. Remember the picture of light tan verses green spots in Egypt. The average Egyptian farmer lost everything in the famine because they were dependent on the annual overflow of water and rich soil of the Nile to replenish the nutrients and water their farms. When that did not happen (the Nile didn't dry up but didn't overflow), the land quickly became barren. However, the Israelites living in Goshen had actually **prospered** during the famine; their flocks could eat grass in Goshen, while the cattle down in Egypt had to be sold to Pharaoh because there was nothing for them to eat.

SLIDE: Occupy Wall Street

You can somewhat understand how the native Egyptians had the Occupy Wall Street mentality here – life's not fair, the game is rigged. Even though the Israelite prosperity was legitimately gained, thoughts of *"That's not fair"* resided in Egyptian hearts

The Pharaoh could have returned their land but DIDN'T. Government leaders will be government leaders and will protect the status quo IF it's in their favor. He kept what was gained during the famine. Sounds familiar?

- It's like if we underpay our taxes, we are obligated to pay a penalty to the government PLUS interest on the money; but if the *government* takes out too much money from our paycheck, you can forget about getting any interest on that money from the government.

SLIDE: SCAPEGOATS

When people go through a grapes of wrath experience, they look for someone to blame.

And so, it was easy for Pharaoh to stoke the flames of anti-Semitism. Rather than returning the people's land, the Pharaoh offered them a scapegoat – the Jews – which has been a tactic that has echoed down through the ages. So many saw it OK to turn those Jewish babies in, to have the mother's suffer punishment.

It's been a pattern repeated thru history, as we saw in Germany after WWI. There will always be enmity between the child and the serpent.

BITTER HERBS WITH THE LAMB

SLIDE: THE SLAVERY

So, the new Pharaoh's paranoia led him first to degrade their working environment and then to use infanticide to curb the growth of their population.

They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. (Exod. 1:14)

Work itself, even HARD work, is not necessarily the issue. Many people today have jobs that entail hard manual labor. What made the work situation in Egypt unbearable was its *extreme* harshness. Exodus uses words such as:

- “**ruthless**” (beperek, Exod. 1:13, 14)
- “**bitter**” (maror, Exod. 1:14)
- “**cruel**” (qashah Exod. 1:14; 6:9)
- “**suffering**” (‘maḵ·ō·ḇāw’ Exod. 3:7) to describe what it was like.

And Exodus notes that when the Pharaoh imposed the additional burden on them of gathering straw for brickmaking,

the Israelites did not listen to Moses because of a “**broken spirit**” (‘miq·qō·ṣer’ Exod. 6:9).

SLIDE: BITTER HERBS, UNLEAVENED BREAD AND THE LAMB

Just prior to the exodus event, God Himself instructed the Israelites to remember that event throughout history by a memorial meal known as ‘Passover’. God passed over all Israelite houses with the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the doorposts, and He mandated the celebration of the Passover festival **annually** for all of history.‡

As we noted the last time that we celebrated the Passover event here at church, there are many traditions regarding food items and wine associated with the meal – however, most of these are additions to the Scriptural requirement. The Torah mentions only three such food items that the Passover meal must contain:

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses... they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.” Numb 9:9,11

We saw earlier that the “**it**” in the sentence refers to the Passover lamb. The only items mandated by Scripture for the Passover are

‡ Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance – Exodus 12:14

- unleavened bread
- bitter herbs, and
- the Passover lamb.

I want to talk just a bit about the first two items – the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, because both reflect upon the Passover Lamb – Jesus.

MATZAH

I would venture a guess and say that we are all familiar with Matzah – unleavened bread.

SLIDE: MATZAH

We can usually tell that Passover is approaching when we see the boxes of matzah lining the shelves in Price Chopper. These packages contain the typical thin, crisp Saltine–cracker type pieces of unleavened bread that is used during the Passover meal.

Matzah is simply bread made by mixing just flour[§] with water and baking it in an oven. It is not enriched with oil, honey or other substances – with the exception of salt being allowed. The difference between matzah and regular bread is

[§] from one of five species of grain – wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats – mentioned in the Torah

that the dough is not allowed to ferment and rise before baking; instead, matzah is mixed, rolled and baked quickly so that the fermentation process does not begin and **thus the bread does not contain any leaven**. In the Bible, leaven is almost always symbolic of sin. Like leaven which permeates the whole lump of dough, sin will spread in a person, a church or a nation, eventually overwhelming and bringing its participants into its bondage and eventually to death.

The reason WHY unleavened bread is eaten at Passover time is **THAT GOD COMMANDED IT**. In Deuteronomy Chapter 16, God told Moses:

"Do not eat it (Passover Lamb) with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat **unleavened bread, the bread of affliction****, **because you left Egypt in haste**—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt." Deuteronomy 16:3

So, this is NOT just tradition; it was a command by God in Scripture that unleavened bread be eaten at Passover and for the next seven days (Feast of Unleavened Bread).^{††} This was an addition way of reminding the Jews of the Exodus – that they were in such a hurry to leave that there was no time to wait for the dough to rise.

** Matzah is also known as 'Lechem Oni' ("Bread of Affliction").

†† Additional commands regarding the eating of unleavened bread are found in Exodus 12:8; 29:2; and Numbers 9:11

Here we see the customary thin crispy matzah. It contains stripes and is pierced with holes, characteristics that have often been used as symbolizing the stripes Jesus received from whips and the piercing of His hands and feet.

- These are beneficial – even appropriate – illustrations of what Christ went through on that day, but – and this may come as a shock for many – this type of matzah is **NOT** what Jesus Himself would have eaten at the Last Supper.

- Jesus would have eaten SOFT MATZAH.

SOFT MATZAH

SLIDE: SOFT MATZAH

Soft matzah is something like pita bread and was the **ONLY** type of matzah used in the Passover meal from the time of the first Passover up until at least the year 1770 AD.

[During the 1950s & 1960s, Jews in Moscow would get on a streetcar and travel an hour or more to the outskirts of the city, lugging suitcases or large woven bags—anything big enough to hold a carton of matzah without raising the suspicion of informers or the official enforcers of Soviet anti-Jewish oppression. They would go surreptitiously and

purchase the round and soft handmade *shmurah* matzah, others the square and less expensive hand-cranked “machine” kind.^{22]}

You see, matzah was at one time a home-baked, soft product that was baked *daily* during Passover week. But, many Jews in Europe eventually stopped baking it during Passover, so it had to be manufactured PRIOR to Passover because of the Biblical mandate to have it. The problem was that soft matzah had a short “shelf-life” and became moldy if left unrefrigerated for too many days. Since refrigeration was not an option back then, it became necessary to bake it dry, and the matzah production moved out of the homes and into the factories of Europe.²³

- So, Matzah is now manufactured into a dry product simply to prevent it becoming moldy, which never was a problem back when everyone baked Matzah fresh daily.

“KORECH SANDWICH”

There’s an interesting part in the modern text (Haggadah) that is used as a script for celebrating the Seder that illustrates this what I’m talking about. Part of script contains a segment referred to as Korech (pronounced *kor-ech*).²⁴ The word

"Korech" means roll up or bend around. Back when Jesus was a young child, there was a famous Doctor of the Torah named Hillel – Hillel the Elder is how he is called. He was around at the time of King Herod.²⁵ Hillel might have met a young Jesus when Jesus was teaching in the temple at the age of twelve²⁶ – we don't know – but we do know that he died when Jesus was in His early teens.

Well, Hillel looked at the text of Numbers (9:9–11) where it says that the Passover lamb had to be eaten together with the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. He concluded that they **MUST** be eaten **TOGETHER**, and the soft matzah allows you to roll it around the bitter herbs and lamb. There was another school of thought, however, that says it is not necessary and they may be eaten separately.

The modern Passover Seder contains both practices so as not to offend anyone. However, there is actually a part of the Seder titled as 'Korech' and it cites Hillel and – in his memory – it requires that the bitter herbs and lamb be eaten together.

"Thus did Hillel do at the time of the Bet HaMikdash (Holy Temple): He would combine Passover -- lamb, Matzah and Maror and eat them together, as it said: "They shall eat it with Matzah and bitter herbs."²⁷

Jews call this a "Korech *sandwich*"²⁸, although it is NOT a sandwich per se but more like a PITA WRAP. The hard and

thin, cracker-like matzah as we know it just doesn't permit you to fold it around the bitter herbs and lamb without breaking.

Today, some people do pierce the soft matzah, so it sometimes does have puncture marks like the rigid matzah; however, that is done only to help insure that the bread does not rise – it has nothing to do with Passover Seder except in tradition.

BITTER HERBS

The Lamb is to be eaten with Bitter Herbs...

~~SLIDE: MAROR~~

Bitter herbs, known in Hebrew as "*Maror*", have a prominent role in the traditional Passover Seder meal. The Bible does not specify what type of bitter herb to use, so technically, *any* herb with a bitter flavor could be used during the Seder meal.

- {"herbs" – *Henry the VIII*, Herman's Hermits}

<clicks> The five most common are: **Horseradish, Chicory, Endive, Romaine Lettuce** and something called **Sow Thistle**.²⁹

I had no idea what Sow Thistle was. Well, it is an edible wildflower somewhat like dandelion. These are best consumed when the plant is young because the older it gets, the more bitter it becomes. This plant will grow almost everywhere. It likes cracks in driveways, roadsides, fields, meadows, and gravel banks. **Many people tend to confuse sow thistle with dandelions**, but supposedly you can tell the difference because sow thistle usually has many flowers sprouting out on each stalk, whereas dandelion only has one flower per stalk.³⁰

Romaine lettuce being on the list of bitter herbs surprised me, because it's Donna's preferred type lettuce, and it doesn't taste bitter to me. I found out that lettuce *can* be bitter when the grower lets the lettuce grow too long. That is when the lettuce "bolts" – how's that for a technical term I learned a week ago. "Bolt" means that in the center of the lettuce, the flower stalk comes up and that tells you that the lettuce has gone too far. Grocery stores sometimes cut off the flower stalk and sell it, which means it will have a bitter taste. This will cause *any* lettuce to be bitter.

- I think **Kale** would be a much better choice for a bitter herb.

These bitter herbs was not nauseously bitter, but they have a sufficient degree of bitterness to add a relish to the lamb.

EATING IT TOGETHER

SLIDE: WITH BITTER HERBS

Back to the main text: “With bitter herbs they shall eat the Lamb.”

Ok – let’s put all these together. God mandated that the matzah and bitter herbs should be eaten together with the Passover lamb.

“Eat [the lamb] with the matzahs and maror.”

Torah scholars tell us that the phraseology of this command is very precise: eating the maror (bitter herbs) is a part of the command of the paschal lamb. Rather than being an independent commandment, it is a PREREQUISITE for the paschal lamb. (Talmud, *Pesachim 90a.*)³¹

I intentionally use the word “*commandment*” here. The As we saw in previous discussions, the Torah contains **613** commandments, not just the Ten with which we are most familiar. The Ten are considered as 10 categories under which

the other 603 separate into.³² And, believe it or not, Judaism considers that ALL 613 commandments are EQUALLY IMPORTANT because human beings, with our limited understanding of the universe, have no way of knowing which of them are more important in the eyes of the Creator.³³

This text of this commandment is true in our life as Christians.

Many of the basic following points are noted in Charles Spurgeon's sermon BITTER HERBS NO. 2727³⁴

- When we are about to *first* receive Him as Lord and Savior, Jesus the Lamb of God is often received with bitter herbs.

There is always mingled with the joyful belief, a measure of sorrowful repentance. It is difficult for me to understand a faith which has not a tear in its eye when it looks to Jesus. Dry-eyed faith seems to me to be not born of the Spirit of God.

- But – just being SORRY about my sins is NOT ENOUGH. Repentance *without faith in Christ* is nothing better than ruin and despair. **It will be POISON TO OUR SOULS and destroy us, as it did Judas.**

- And the other side of the coin is also true – Faith in Christ *without repentance* is no better than demons' faith, “they also believe and tremble” but do not repent (James 2:19).

Bring our bitter herbs to the Lord's table and He will give us, through the Lamb that was slain, both faith and pardon and peace.

Pardon is what we all want

- DISTASTE FOR THE THINGS IN WHICH WE ONCE TOOK PLEASURE.

Then, the text applies when there comes a distaste for the things in which we once took pleasure. These also are some of the bitter herbs which you will have to eat—things that once seemed quite sweet will appear utterly loathsome and you will turn away from them with disgust. Your tastes will completely change. Your desires will alter. You will not always be able to understand yourself and, oftentimes, your mouth will be filled with bitter herbs on this account.

- Continuing in Christian Life

Then, this text applies to Christians in everyday life, or at least I find it to be so in my own case.

It is not unusual that thoughts of our past deeds come to mind, and we feel a deep regret. And you may wonder, as I sometimes do, when God says that He has ‘removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west’ (Psalm 103:12), and that He has forgotten them (Isaiah 43:25), then WHY DO I REMEMBER THEM? Why do they keep coming to mind and causing a pit in my stomach? Is there something wrong with me – do I need a 5 step self-help program in forgetting by self-help gurus as Joel Osteen? Am I a failure regarding faith?

While we know that all these sins are now forgiven, we cannot seem to rid ourselves completely of their memory.

Why do these memories resurface? I’ve come to accept that they **will** in spite of them being forgiven.

- Perhaps the Holy Spirit brings these things to mind – not to accuse us but to prick our pride and remind us where we came from;
- or maybe WE do it ourselves, or
- at times maybe SATAN does it when we feel accused
- But when it occurs, it is an opportunity to be reminded how He has saved us from the past.

Martin Luther said that whenever Satan reminded him of his sins, he would say: "Dear devil, I have heard the record. But I have committed far more sins which do not even stand in your record. Put them down too."³⁵

Then Luther would thank Satan for bringing them us, for it would give him a change to run to Jesus; he would tell him:: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, **what of it?** For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!"

That's what it means to eat bitter herbs with the Lamb – it makes the lamb **taste even better**. We cannot just taste the bitter herbs and be dwell there;

- We are commanded by God, as equally forcefully as the command not to murder, to eat the bitter herbs with the Lamb – not separately, but together.

The bitterness will eventually become unbearable without the sweetness of the lamb. We need to take both – the bitter herbs and the Lamb while we may. Bring our bitter herbs to the Lord and He will give us faith and pardon and peace. Pardon is what we all want

Even if the Holy Spirit doesn't bring them up, and if our conscience was free of their memory, and even Satan refused to taunt us, God mandated that the Israelites would take time out of their lives every year to eat bitter herbs with the Lamb as reminder of what He has done for them. **And He called it a Festival.** The memory serves a purpose – it drive us even closed to the Lamb.

One final brief point – both the herbs and the Lamb are to be eaten with the unleavened bread. Leaven is a sign of pride in Scripture. When we think that we're so great in our own opinion – like how the Pharisee prayed in the Temple *"I thank Thee of Lord that I am not like this man"*, at those times, Christ appears little to us.

But when you are very little in your own sight, then Christ becomes all the greater to you. When you feel ashamed that you are a poor sinner, Christ is raised up when we call on Him. If any of us have begun to spread out the fine peacock feathers of perfectionism, Christ fades into the background in our minds.

It is a bad sign whenever you think that you do not need to confess sin, or to look to Christ as you did at the first when you said— "I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is my sufficiency."

The prophet Micah wrote:

- **With what shall I come to the Lord**
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?

Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

To walk humbly before our God.

If anyone here is feeling depressed and is AFRAID to come to Christ because of how you feel, let me assure you that these are the very reasons WHY you may come to Him! If any here is deeply sad about their families and the troubles they are going through, that's another bitter herb of life.

- You already have the bitter herbs and you have the unleavened bread —now come and eat again of the Lamb.

SLIDE: AGNUS DEI

The *Agnus Dei* is sung or recited.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

which means:

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

Grant us peace. Come again like Peter did – after he denied Christ three times, Scripture **SPECIFICALLY** records that “And he went out and wept **bitterly**.” (Luke 22:62). But then he came back. And Jesus welcomed him with open arms.

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.aish.com/j/j/51477482.html>
- ² Judaism 101, *Pesach: Passover*, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidava.htm>
- ³ http://www.freebeginning.com/new_testament_dates/
- ⁴ John Piper, *All Scripture Is Breathed Out by God, Continue in It*, desiringgod.org
- ⁵ 7:50 minute mark on Owen Carey's 9/11/2016 presentation on cckinderhook.org, Audio/Visual, Sunday Messages
- ⁶ Westminster Confession, I. ix.
- ⁷ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/may/cover-story-inside-popular-controversial-bethel-church.html>
- ⁸ Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth – A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles*, (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2003), p. 76
- ⁹ “Bill Johnson, Friendship with God,” [n.d.], video clip, accessed August 28, 2014, YouTube, http://youtu.be/P4RZ_ctiwIE.
- ¹⁰ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Introduction, Chapter VI, The Protestant Rule of Faith.
- ¹¹ Tom Bradford, Torahclass, *Week 2 Exodus Chapter 1*
- ¹² *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, #70, 'oben'
- ¹³ Kevin McGeough, University of Lethbridge, *Birth Bricks, Potter's Wheels, and Exodus 1:16*, http://www.academia.edu/2092474/Birth_Bricks_Potter_s_Wheels_and_Exodus_1_16
- ¹⁴ Strong's, p. 986, #1121 'ben'.
- ¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* — Book II, Chapter 9
- ¹⁶ <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/a-diseased-hand>
- ¹⁷ J. H. Hertz, ed., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 2nd edition, Soncino Press, p.208
- ¹⁸ Daube, David, *Civil Disobedience in Antiquity* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1972), p.5
- ¹⁹ Strong's, #2422, 'chayeh'
- ²⁰ J. H. Hertz, ed., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 2nd edition, Soncino Press, p.208
- ²¹ *The Sanctity of Truth*, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/sanctity-truth/>
- ²² *The Soviet Jews Who Risked Persecution for the Sake of Matzah*, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/2016/04/the-soviet-jews-who-risked-persecution-for-the-sake-of-matzah/>
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