

Chapter IX

What are Phasekh and Unleavened Bread?

As already demonstrated, the חג (*Khag*; Festival) of Unleavened Bread forms part of the מועדי (*moadi*; appointed times) commanded by Yahweh, which gain their legal authority by means of a תקנה (*khoquth*; statute).¹ The term חג (*khag*) is also used when the entire seven days of eating unleavened bread is called the Phasekh.² The first and seventh day of this *khag* are described as sacred מיקראי (*miqrai*; gatherings for reading),³ i.e., a sacred convocation on a Sabbath or high Sabbath day during which Scriptures are to be studied.⁴ To understand the Festival of Phasekh (Passover) and Unleavened Bread, we must first define the meanings of these two terms and explain what prompts them to be festival observances.

The Covenant Meal

The Phasekh supper and the eating of unleavened bread for seven days are meant to be a celebration and a reaffirmation of the Abrahamic Covenants.⁵ It is centered around the festival meal of the Phasekh victim and the eating of unleavened bread for seven days. One of the important ingredients in the Phasekh and this seven-day *khag*, therefore, is the Phasekh repast.

In Hebrew culture, a meal binds one to an oath, vow, or contract and can be used to ratify a covenant.⁶ Herein, for example, is the source for the covenant meal of marriage which accompanies a wedding. The wedding meal is called a משתה (*mishteh*; banquet).⁷ The Phasekh supper, therefore, is in fact a covenant meal, binding one to the Abrahamic Covenants and to the messiah.⁸ The continued observance of the Phasekh repast and the seven days of eating unleavened bread during the centuries that followed the Exodus were

¹ E.g., Exod., 13:3–10; Deut., 4:12–14, cf., Exod., 21:1, 23:14–17; and see our discussion above Chap. I, pp. 16ff.

² Ezek., 45:21; cf., Exod., 34:18; Deut., 16:1–8, 16; 2 Chron., 30:21.

³ Lev., 23:7f. And see above Chap. I, p. 15, n. 71.

⁴ For example, Lev., 23:3, reads, “Six days work is to be done, and on the seventh day is a Sabbath *sabbathon*, a sacred מיקראי (*miqra*; gathering for reading), not any work you shall do. It is a Sabbath for Yahweh in all your dwellings.”

⁵ For the connection between the act of cutting meat and eating a meal as part of the act of confirming a covenant see above Chap. II, pp. 37f, p. 38, n. 27.

⁶ E.g., Gen., 14:18–24; 26:30; 31:51–54; Josh., 9:14; Obad., 7.

⁷ SEC, Heb. #4960; e.g., Gen., 29:16–30, esp. v. 22.

⁸ The Phasekh lamb served this covenant function. Joachim Jeremias notes that, “The blood of the lambs slaughtered at the exodus from Egypt had redemptive power and made God’s covenant with Abraham operative” (EWJ, pp. 225f, and cf., his ns. 4 & 5). For a complete discussion of the Abrahamic Covenants, the inheritance attached thereto, and its connection with the messiah see TCP.

expressly stated to be a זָכַר (*zakar*; memorial)⁹ *khag*, the purpose of which was to recall the significance of the Exodus parable signifying the fact that Yahweh would fulfill the words of his covenant to Abraham.¹⁰ Phasekh is also a “night of שְׁמֹרִים (*shamarim*; observations, guarding, watching),¹¹ i.e., a night to establish the covenant. Since the Abrahamic Covenants are an agreement enabling men to obtain the divine nature (Yahweh’s love), after the resurrection of the messiah, the Phasekh supper was also counted among the Christian “ἀγάπαις (*agapais*; love feasts).”¹²

Meaning of Phasekh

Phasekh comes from the root meaning to “skip” or “limp” over or “pass over,” and by extension “to spare,” “protect,” or “set apart” something.¹³ It does not derive from the Greek term πάθος (*pathos*; to suffer) as some of the early Christians tried to claim.¹⁴ When Elijah challenged the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, the latter, we are told, פָּסַח (*phasekh*; limped) beside the altar

⁹ זָכַר (*zakar*), means, “prop. to *mark* (so as to be recognized, i.e. to *remember* . . . a *memento* . . . impl. *commemoration*:—memorial, memory, remembrance” (SEC, Heb. #2142, 2143); “*mediate upon, call to mind*” (HEL, p. 74).

¹⁰ Exod., 12:14, 13:6–10.

¹¹ Exod., 12:42, cf., 12:7, 25. שְׁמֹרִים (*shamarim*), from שָׁמַר (*shamar*), “prop. to *hedge about* (as with thorns), i.e. *guard*; gen. to *protect, attend to, etc.*” (SEC, Heb. #8104); means, “*observance of a festival*” (HEL, p. 272); “*observances*” (YAC, p. 708). The LXX of Exod., 12:42, translates the Hebrew to read, “It is a watch kept to the sovereign, so that he should bring them out of the land of Egypt; that very night is a watch kept to the sovereign, so that it should be to all the children of Israel to their generations.”

¹² Jude, 1:12 (cf., 2 Pet., 2:13; 1 Cor., 11:20–34). NBD, p. 754, notes that, “The separation of the meal or Agapē from the Eucharist lies outside the times of the New Testament.” It is very possible that the term Agapē was applied early on to all of the early Christian festival meals, from Phasekh to Tabernacles. Yet, as time proceeded, this term lost its connection with the scriptural festival suppers and was broadly applied to any fellowship meal. Also see NCE, 1, pp. 193f; ISBE, 1, pp. 69f; ADB, 3, p. 149. “Christ placed the new rite in close connexion with the Passover.”

¹³ פָּסַח (*Phasekh*), a prim. root, “to *hop*, i.e. (fig.) *skip over* (or *spare*); by impl. to *hesitate*; also (lit.) to *limp*, to *dance*:—halt, become lame, leap, pass over . . . a *preemption*; i.e. *exemption*; used only tech. of the Jewish *Passover* (the festival or the victim):—passover (offering) . . . *limping* . . . *lame*” (SEC, Heb., #6452–6455); “**be lame, limp** . . . **limp around** (in cultic observance)” (CHAL, p. 294); “*passed over for defense, defended, protected*” (HEL, p. 211); “TO PASS OVER, TO PASS BY . . . to *pass over, to spare* . . . *sparing, immunity* from penalty and calamity” (GHCL, p. 683); “Passover, Heb. *pesah*, comes from a verb meaning ‘to pass over,’ in the sense of ‘to spare’ (Ex. xii. 13, 27, etc.)” NBD, p. 936; “to ‘pass over,’ to ‘spare’ (BJK, p. 324); “meaning ‘to pass or spring over,’ also ‘to limp’” (MDB, p. 648); “to *pass through, to leap, to halt* . . . then topically to *pass by* in the sense of *sparing, to save, to show mercy*” (CBTEL, 7, p. 733). J. B. Segal shows that, like the term עָבַר (*heber*), Phasekh can also mean to “set apart,” as something “singled out (for forgiveness or kindness)” (THP, pp. 185ff). On various theories of the etymology of the word Phasekh see THP, pp. 95–113.

¹⁴ The popular interpretation among many early Greek-speaking Christians that the word Phasekh is derived as a pun from the Greek term πάθος (*pathos*), “*paschein* being the present infinitive, *pathein* the aorist infinitive of the same verb” (EEC, p. 138, #21, n. a), meaning to “suffer,” is, as Raniero Cantalamessa concludes, a “naive etymology (deriving a Hebrew from a Greek word” (ibid.). It was apparently derived from the Greek-speaking Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria (Philo, *Heir.* 40, §192, *Cong.*, 19, §106); cf., Ambrose (*Epist.* 1, 90), who connects the Phasekh with πάθος (*pathos*). This etymology quickly became popular among the Greek-speaking Christians of Asia (e.g., Melito, *Pas.*, 46; an unnamed Quartodeciman writer, Ps.-Hippolytus, 49, see SC, 27, pp. 175–177) and spread among the Latin writers (e.g., Tertullian, *Marc.*, 4:40:1; Ps.-Tertullian, 8:1; Ps.-Cyprian, 2; Gregory Elv., 9:9). The primary reason for this popularity was the allusion to the sufferings of the messiah at Phasekh. Despite the efforts of Origen (*Pas.*, 1) and others (e.g., Augustine, *Tract.*, 55:1, on 13:1–5), who correctly and strongly opposed this interpretation, it prospered for a long time.

as part of their statutory procedure—this in an effort to ask their deity to perform a sign so that they could be delivered from the hands of Yahweh and his prophet Elijah.¹⁵ One could also *phasekh* (limp, pass over) at a funeral, in an attempt to ask a deity to spare or deliver the deceased. In this regard, Theodor Herzl Gaster writes of the term Phasekh:

Similarly, Heliodorus, a Greek author of the early Christian era, informs us specifically that the seafaring men of Tyre, on the coast of Syria, used to worship their god by performing a strange dance, one movement of which consisted in limping along the ground. Analogous performances are recorded also among the pre-Mohammedan Arabs and among the ancient inhabitants of both India and Ireland.¹⁶

Theodor Herzl Gaster then adds:

The performance of a limping dance happens to be a characteristic feature of *mourning* ceremonies among Arab and Syrian peasants—so much so that in the Arabic and Syriac languages the word for *limp* comes to be a synonym for *mourn*. “It is customary,” says the great Arabist Lane in his famous *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*, “for the female relatives and friends of a person deceased to meet together by his house on each of the first THREE DAYS AFTER HIS FUNERAL, and there to perform a lamentation and a strange kind of dance. . . . Each dances with a slow movement and in an irregular manner; generally pacing about and *raising and depressing the body*” (italics mine).

Nor is this custom confined to modern times. An ancient Canaanite poem of the fourteenth century B.C. uses the word “hoppings” (or “skippings”) in the sense of mourning exercises; and a Babylonian document now in the British Museum lists the term *hopper* (or *skipper*) as a synonym for *professional mourner*. Moreover, it is significant that the standard poetic meter used in ancient Hebrew dirges was distinguished by a special limping rhythm—a fact which would be readily explicable if they were designed to accompany a limping dance.¹⁷

Therefore, it was ancient practice to *phasekh* as part of a funeral ceremony. There are Egyptian people who still limp for three days following a death. One might readily ask, “From where did this common meaning and tradition

¹⁵ 1 Kings, 18:26, in context with 18:17–19:1.

¹⁶ PHT, p. 23. For the Tyrian dance in honor of Heracles see Heliodorus, 4:17, cf., Herodian, 5:5:9.

¹⁷ PHT, p. 24.

in the Near East arise?" The answer proves important not only in the story of the Exodus and the death of the first-born in Egypt at that time, but in the story of Yahushua's own death and subsequent resurrection after three days. We shall have more to say about this aspect later.

The Jewish priest Josephus and the Christian theologian Pseudo-Chrysostom (late fourth century C.E.) both give us the theological interpretation. Josephus notes that Phasekh "signifies ὑπερβάσις (*hyperbasia*; passing over),¹⁸ because on that day the deity passed over our people when he smote the Egyptians with a plague."¹⁹ Pseudo-Chrysostom similarly writes:

. . . for Phasekh means "ὑπερβάσις (*hyperbasis*; passing over)," when the Destroyer who struck the first-born passed over the houses of the Hebrews.²⁰

Philo translates Phasekh as διαβατήρια (*diabateria*), meaning "the crossing-festival."²¹ Similarly, Origen,²² Gregory of Nazianzus,²³ and other Christian writers render it διαβασίς (*diabasis*),²⁴ meaning "passage."²⁵ The Vulgate gives the Latin form *transitus* (passing over).²⁶ In classical Greek διαβατήρια (*diabateria*) are offerings made before crossing a boundary, and also "before crossing a swollen river."²⁷ The sacrifice, accordingly, was performed to assure one's safe passage or crossing. F. H. Colson, meanwhile, argues:

Philo consistently uses διαβατήρια or διαβασίς = πάσχα [[Paskha; Phasekh]], and several times, e.g. *Leg. All.* iii. 94, allegorizes it as in §147, shewing that he traces the name not to the passing over of the Israelites by the destroying angel (Ex. xii. 23 and 27), but to the crossing of Israel itself from Egypt, the type of the body, and no doubt also the crossing of the Red Sea.²⁸

F. H. Colson's understanding is not quite complete. Philo also equates διαβατήρια (*diabateria*) directly with the πάσχα (Paskha) of the 14th and the events of the death angel, indicating that all of the events associated with the Exodus migration out of Egypt were included.²⁹ Even Jerome, who wrote the Vulgate version of the Bible, applies the Latin word *transitus* to both the passing over of the destroyer and to the passing through of the Suph Sea (Red Sea)

¹⁸ GEL, 1968, pp. 1860f.

¹⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:14:6.

²⁰ Ps.-Chrysostom, 1:4. Also see the Chron. Paschale, 1, pp. 424f; Gaudentius, *Tract.*, 2:25; Maximus, *Serm.*, 54:1.

²¹ Philo, *Spec.*, 2:27.

²² Origen, *Pas.*, 1:18, 22, 2:17, 4:18, 22, as well as "ὑπερβάσις (*hyperbasis*; passing over)" in 45:14, 47:33.

²³ Gregory Naz., *Orat.*, 45:10.

²⁴ E.g., Eusebius, *Pas.*, 1-3, 7; Didymus, 5:88; Chron. Paschale, 1, pp. 424f; CBTEL, 7, p. 734.

²⁵ GEL, 1968, p. 390, "crossing over, passage."

²⁶ HLD, p. 1891. Cf., Ambrose, *Epist.*, 1:10, *Exp. Luc.*, 10:34, *Sac.*, 1:4:12; Pas. Proclam., *Exsult.* 4; Jerome, *Com. Matt.*, 4, on 26:2; Augustine, *Tract.*, 55:1, on 13:1-5.

²⁷ Plutarch, *Luc.*, 24; cf., Philo, *Spec.*, 2:27 §147.

²⁸ Colson, *Philo*, vii, p. 394, n. a.

²⁹ Philo, *Moses*, 2:41f, *Spec.*, 2:27f.

by the Israelites.³⁰ Escaping the death angel was in fact part of their safe passage. The sacrifice of the Phasekh flock animal by the Israelites was meant to assure a safe journey for the followers of Yahweh both through the land of Egypt and through the Suph Sea (Sea of Termination)³¹ at the time of the Exodus.

To פסח (*phasekh*), therefore, means to skip or pass over, or to pass around something, showing mercy and sparing it. For this reason it is simply called “Passover” in English. The Aramaic Targum Onqelos (fifth century C.E.) supports this when it renders “זבח פסח (*zebakh Phasekh*; sacrifice of the Phasekh)” as “דיבך חייט (*diybakh khiys*; sacrifice of mercy).”³² Likewise, the LXX at Exodus, 12:13, where the Hebrew has, “I will *phasekh* over you,” renders *phasekh* as I will “σκεπάσω (*skepaso*; cover over)” you.³³ Isaiah, 31:5, indicates the same sense when it notes that Yahweh will defend and deliver Jerusalem, “פסוח (*phasukh*; passing over), and saving it.” The LXX of this verse translates the form פסוח (*phasukh*) as περιποιήσεται (*peripoiesetai*), meaning to “keep safe.”³⁴

In Scriptures the name “Phasekh” is applied to three different aspects of the festival:

- In both the Old and New Testaments, Phasekh is the name of the lamb that is sacrificed, roasted, and eaten.³⁵
- It is the name of the festival day upon which the lamb is sacrificed.³⁶
- The name is also applied to the entire seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread.³⁷

The reinstatement of the Phasekh sacrifice after the revolt at Mount Sinai, when the Israelites built the golden calf, was meant to look back at the parable type that the original sacrifice performed in Egypt represented, which pointed to the coming death of the messiah. Yahushua the messiah is the “lamb” of

³⁰ Jerome, *Com. Matt.*, 4, on 26:2.

³¹ The Hebrew name יַם סוּף (Yam Suph; Sea of Suph) is found in the Greek sources (LXX, Exod., 13:18, 13:8; Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:15:1; and many others) as ἐρυθρὸν θάλασσαν (*eruthran thalassan*; Red Sea). Many modern day translators assume that the name Yam Suph was Egyptian and equate it with an Egyptian word that signifies a seaweed resembling wool, hence it has been popular to call it the *sea of reeds* or *weeds* (e.g., DOTB, pp. 785f; DB, p. 556; NBD, pp. 1077f). Nevertheless, the word is not Egyptian. The ancient Egyptians never even referred to this body of water by that name. It is Hebrew and means “to snatch away, i.e. *terminate*:—consume, have an end, perish . . . to come to an end . . . a *termination*:—conclusion, end, hinder part” (SEC, Heb. #5486, 5487, 5490). The Suph Sea was the sea that formed the border of the ancient frontier of Egypt proper; it was at the end of the land (VT, 15, pp. 395–398). It was also the sea in which Pharaoh and his Egyptian army perished—an event that terminated the Exodus experience. Accordingly, some understand Yam Suph to mean the “sea of extinction” or something quite similar, indicating “the primal significance of the miracle at the sea” (MBD, pp. 738f).

³² Targ. Onq., Exod., 12:27.

³³ GEL, p. 732.

³⁴ GEL, p. 630, “a *keeping safe, preservation . . . a gaining possession of, acquisition, obtaining . . . a possession.*” The term basically means to gain possession of something in order to keep it safe.

³⁵ E.g., Exod., 12:6, 8, 11, 21, 27; Deut., 16:6; 2 Chron., 30:18, 35:13; Matt., 26:17–19; Mark, 14:12, 14, 16; Luke, 22:7, 8, 11, 13, 15; John, 18:28; 1 Cor., 5:7 (verb).

³⁶ E.g., Exod., 34:25; Josh., 5:10; Luke, 2:41; John, 13:1.

³⁷ E.g., Ezek., 45:21; Luke, 22:1.

Yahweh who was sacrificed for our safe passage.³⁸ The apostle Saul, for example, writes, “For also the messiah, our Phasekh, was sacrificed for us.”³⁹

Unleavened Bread

The Festival of Unleavened Bread was built around the consumption of unleavened bread. The Hebrew word for unleavened bread is מַצֹּת (*matzah*), a term meaning “sweetness (not soured).”⁴⁰ Leavened bread (חֶמֶץ; *seor*), on the other hand, is made by retaining a piece of dough from a previous batch which has become yeast, i.e., fermented and turned acidic. This piece is mixed or hidden in the flour and kneaded along with it. When baked, the leavening, which has diffused itself throughout the dough, causes the bread to rise.

In Scriptures, leavening implies corruption and sin.⁴¹ It represents malice and wickedness,⁴² false teaching,⁴³ hypocrisy,⁴⁴ and false doctrine and culpable ignorance.⁴⁵ Conversely, unleavened bread represents incorruption and sinlessness. The unleavened bread of the Phasekh supper, to demonstrate, represents sincerity and truth.⁴⁶ It also signifies the sinless body of Yahushua the messiah.⁴⁷ In another place, in association with the time of Phasekh, Yahushua called himself “the bread of life,” “living bread,” and the “manna”⁴⁸ bread that was sent “out of heaven” to the Israelites in the wilderness.⁴⁹ Since the messiah has always been without sin,⁵⁰ these statements make it clear that sinlessness is equated with the incorruption of unleavened bread.

The Story of Phasekh

Our next effort in defining the Phasekh supper and the seven days of eating unleavened bread is to give an overall summary of the Exodus experience. This event was the first time in which a Phasekh animal was commanded to be sacrificed and eaten by the Israelites. On its primary level, the yearly observance of the Phasekh and seven days of eating unleavened bread is meant

³⁸ Isa., 53:1–12; John, 1:29, 36; Acts, 8:32–36; 1 Pet., 1:18f; Rev., 5:6–6:1, 16, 7:9–17, 9:7–9, 21:14, 22f, 22:1–3.

³⁹ 1 Cor., 5:7.

⁴⁰ SEC, Heb. #4682, “prop. *sweetness*; concr. *sweet* (i.e. not soured or bittered with yeast); spec. an *unfermented cake or loaf*.”

⁴¹ Gal., 5:7–10.

⁴² 1 Cor., 5:6–8.

⁴³ Matt., 16:6–12; Mark, 8:15.

⁴⁴ Luke, 12:1.

⁴⁵ Matt., 22:23, 29.

⁴⁶ 1 Cor., 5:8.

⁴⁷ Matt., 26:19f, 26; Mark, 14:16f, 22; Luke, 22:13f, 19; 1 Cor., 11:23f.

⁴⁸ Manna was unleavened bread. This detail is verified by the fact that manna, after being delivered in the morning from heaven, did not survive until the next morning, unless by divine intervention on the sixth day of the week—and then it would only last until the morning of the first day of the week—at which time it would rot and be unusable (Josh., 16:13–34). Also, only manna was available for bread during the Israelite 40-year sojourn in the wilderness (Josh., 16:35), yet during that time they continued to keep the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread (Josh., cf., Exod. 34:18–26; Num., 9:1–5). For example, the Israelites were given and continued to eat manna in the first few days of the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread during their first year in the land of Kanaan (Josh., 5:10–12).

⁴⁹ John, 6:4, 26–59. Manna was not allowed to be used once it fermented (Exod., 16:13–22). Therefore, it was always eaten as unleavened bread.

⁵⁰ E.g., 1 John, 3:5; 1 Pet., 2:1f; Heb., 4:15.

to recall the Israelite Exodus out of Egypt.⁵¹ Therefore, it is a recollection of the parables that the Exodus represented (i.e., the death and resurrection of the messiah, the salvation of the first-born or elect of Israel brought about by the shedding of the messiah's blood, the death and resurrection of the elect, and the establishment of the kingdom of Yahweh).⁵² The history is as follows:

After the Israelites spent 400 years in servitude to the Egyptians,⁵³ Yahweh sent his prophets Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh with the request to release the Israelites from bondage in order that they could go and serve Yahweh in the wilderness. To facilitate this endeavor, Moses revealed signs and plagues to Pharaoh in a series of attempts to persuade him to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. After suffering from each plague, Pharaoh would recant of his stubbornness and give permission. Moses would then pray to Yahweh to release Egypt from the plague. Just as quickly as the plague was relieved, Pharaoh would harden his לב (leb; inner self) and would once more refuse to allow Israel to leave the country.⁵⁴

The 10th and last of these plagues occurred on the night of the Phasekh supper. Yahweh had ordered each household of the Israelites to bring in a perfect one-year-old male flock animal from among either their sheep or goats and separate it out on the 10th day of the moon of Abib (later called Nisan). Then at *byn ha-arabim* (within the periods of twilight), on the 14th day of Abib (Nisan), the animal was sacrificed and its blood placed on the door frames of each respective Israelite house. The animal was then roasted and eaten that night.⁵⁵ The Israelites were commanded to be dressed for hasty travel, to remain inside their homes until morning, to eat their Phasekh with unleavened bread, and then ordered that at morning they must burn what remained of the sacrificed animal.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, in the middle of the night, “the destroyer” or angel of death passed through Egypt killing all of the first-born in the land, from the first-born son of Pharaoh to the first-born of all the livestock. Nevertheless, this angel did not enter into the houses where the lamb’s blood was found upon the door post. The first-born of Israel had been saved by the blood of the Phasekh victim.⁵⁷ The devastation to the Egyptian population, on the other hand, was so great that Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave the country, taking with them a great plunder.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Exod., 12:17, 13:3–10.

⁵² See our FSDY, 3, for the prophetic meanings of the Festival of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread.

⁵³ That the Israelites spent 400 years in Egypt see Gen., 15:13f; Acts, 7:6f; Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:9:1, *Wars*, 5:9:4, *Table*, 2:4–6; Ps.-Clement, 1:34; etc. The 210-year chronology for the Egyptian sojourn of the Israelites, which is currently popular, is both late and spurious. It was first formalized by Demetrius, a second century B.C.E. Jewish chronographer, who wrote in the Greek language and flourished in Egypt. It was not totally accepted by Jewish chronologists until the second century C.E. For a full discussion of the correct figure of 400 years and the spurious number 210, see our text entitled *Israelite Chronology* (IC), the third volume in our series on *Ancient World Chronology*.

⁵⁴ Exod., 5:1–10:29.

⁵⁵ Exod., 11:1–12:28.

⁵⁶ Exod., 12:8, 10f, 17, 22.

⁵⁷ Exod., 11:4–7, 12:12f, 23, 29.

⁵⁸ Exod., 12:30–36.

The night of Phasekh did not end the trauma. On the 15th of Abib, the Israelites left Rameses and gathered themselves at a place called Succuth.⁵⁹ From Succuth they marched through the eastern wilderness of Egypt toward the Suph (Termination)⁶⁰ Sea, called by the Greeks the Red Sea,⁶¹ located on the edge of the Egyptian frontier.⁶² As they were leaving the populated regions of Egypt, the Egyptians were seen burying their dead.⁶³ The Israelites continued marching day and night until they arrived at the Suph Sea, all the while continuing to bake and consume their supply of unleavened bread.⁶⁴

During the Israelite march, Pharaoh once again hardened his *leb* (inner self) and repented of having let the Israelites go. In response, he mustered his chariots and warriors and pursued them.⁶⁵ As the seventh day of unleavened bread arrived, while the Israelites were in the process of eating their festival meal and celebrating the high Sabbath of the last day of the festival, Pharaoh caught up with his prey.⁶⁶ Using his well-trained and massive army, he cornered the Israelites at the mouth of a natural pocket formed by the sea and a mountain that terminated at its shore.⁶⁷ It was at this point that Yahweh, within a pillar of cloud, moved in between Pharaoh's army and the Israelites.⁶⁸

At the same time, just after the arrival of Pharaoh's army, a tremendous storm rose up. Under instructions from Yahweh, Moses next stretched out his hand over the sea with his staff and a pathway through the water opened. During the rest of that night, the Israelites followed Moses through the midst of the Suph Sea, escaping to the opposite shore.⁶⁹

Shortly before dawn, as the last of the Israelites were escaping to the opposite shore, the Egyptian army, in hot pursuit, followed the Israelites into the sea. However, Yahweh and his cloud of glory still formed a barrier between the rear guard of the Israelites and the front lines of the Egyptians. Then, when all the Israelites had reached safety, Yahweh looked upon the Egyptians from his cloud, causing them great consternation. Suddenly, the

⁵⁹ Num., 33:3-5; Exod., 12:37. Josephus notes that many years later the Persian leader King Cambyses built the Egyptian city of Babylon upon the previously deserted site of Succuth (Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:15:1). Today the ruins of Egyptian Babylon are found in Fostat, located near Old Cairo.

⁶⁰ See above n. 31.

⁶¹ In the LXX the Hebrew name "Suph" Sea is translated by the Greek name for this sea, the "ἐρυθρὰς (*eruthras*; Red)" Sea (e.g., at LXX Exod., 13:18, 15:4, 22, 23:31, and so forth).

⁶² Exod., 12:37-42, 13:17-14:1; Num., 33:3-7. When the Israelites crossed the Suph Sea they found themselves located in Etham, in the wilderness of Shur (Exod., 13:20, 15:22; Num., 33:6-8), the territory that bordered the front of Egypt (Gen., 25:18; 1 Sam., 15:7).

⁶³ Num., 33:3f.

⁶⁴ Exod., 12:34, 39, 13:18-14:2.

⁶⁵ Exod., 14:3-9.

⁶⁶ Exod., 14:5-12. For the evidence that the Israelites were eating their feast meal when Pharaoh arrived see FSDY, 3.

⁶⁷ This detail is indicated by Exod., 14:3, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." Josephus explains that the Egyptians had, "confined them between inaccessible cliffs and the sea; for it was the sea in which terminated a mountain whose rugged face was destitute of tracks and prohibitive for retreat. Accordingly, occupying the pass where the mountain abuts upon the sea, they blocked the passage of the Hebrews, pitching their camp at its mouth, to prevent their escape to the plain" (Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:15:3). And again he writes that the Israelites were, "hemmed in by mountains, sea, and enemy, and seeing nowhere from these any imaginable escape" (Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:15:4).

⁶⁸ Exod., 14:13-20.

⁶⁹ Exod., 14:21f.

water, which had formed great walls on each side of the passageway through the sea, collapsed on top of the Egyptian army, who were now well inside the sea basin.⁷⁰ All the Egyptians were destroyed; all the Israelites were saved.⁷¹

In the representation from the book of Exodus, the Phasekh sacrifice for Yahweh had assured safe conduct for the Israelites during their seven-day journey out of the land of Egypt (the Exodus). The association of a sacrifice made to assure a safe passage and the act of limping (passing over) at a funeral service were also both brought together in this Phasekh episode. Not only was there the death of the Phasekh victim, but the Israelites left Egypt in the midst of a great Egyptian funeral for their first-born. The result of these great events was the birth of the new and independent twelve-tribe nation of Israel, governed by the priests of Levi, and their submission to Yahweh.

Easter Versus Phasekh

Today, many proclaiming themselves to be Christians are under the illusion that the Phasekh has nothing to do with them. Instead, they celebrate Easter. In reality, all ancient Christian assemblies celebrated a form of Phasekh (though opinions on just how to observe this festival varied greatly from assembly to assembly). The celebration of Easter as a Christian festival is in reality a perversion of Phasekh. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, for example, characterizes this alteration of the Phasekh (Pasch) by the Roman assembly as follows:

Not only was the significance of the Jewish feast changed by the Christians, but also the date. The Jewish method of fixing the date, the 14th day of Nisan, did not confine it to any one day; at a very early time Christians assigned their Pasch to the Sunday following the Jewish feast. . . In the beginning Christians depended on Jewish authorities to calculate the date of the Passover, and thus of Easter; but by the 3rd century some Christians started to determine Easter independently. . . Probably a night celebration was determined for this feast because Easter is the Christian Passover, the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover. The Jewish feast was always celebrated at night; it is natural that the Christian feast, which replaced it, would also be a nighttime feast.⁷²

According to Bede (early eighth century C.E.), the English name Easter is derived from *Eostre*, or *Ostara*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring.⁷³ Easter was originally a pagan religious day later modified and adopted as a substitute for Phasekh as part of an ongoing effort to Christianize pagans. There is no reference to Easter in the original Scriptures. The word Easter is found only

⁷⁰ Exod., 14:23–28.

⁷¹ Exod., 14:28–31.

⁷² NCE, 5, pp. 7, 8, 9.

⁷³ Bede, *Temp. Rat.*, 15.

once in the King James Version, at Acts, 12:4, but the original Greek word is *πάσχα* (Paskha = Phasekh).⁷⁴ Albert Barnes refers to the English substitution of Phasekh with “Easter” as an “unhappy translation.” He adds:

The word Easter is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from Eostre, the goddess of Love, or the Venus of the North, in honor of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April (Webster). As this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honor of the resurrection of the Messiah, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service books the term Easter is used frequently to translate the word Passover.⁷⁵

The simple fact is, all ancient Christian assemblies did in truth observe some form of the Phasekh. The name Easter only came centuries later—incorporated into English from their contacts with the Germans and other pagan cultures. This fact is a matter of common knowledge. *The New Bible Dictionary* remarks:

EASTER, a word used in the Germanic languages to denote the festival of the vernal equinox, and subsequently, with the coming of Christianity, to denote the anniversary of the resurrection of Christ (which in Gk. and Romance tongues is denoted by *pascha*, ‘Passover’, and its derivatives).⁷⁶

Webster’s Dictionary comments:

ME. *ester*, *esterne*; AS. *eastre*, in pl. *eastron* (akin to Ger. *Ostern*), spring, Easter; orig., name of pagan vernal festival almost coincident in date with the paschal festival of the church < *Eastre*, dawn goddess.⁷⁷

The Encyclopaedia Britannica notes:

EASTER, the annual festival observed throughout Christendom in commemoration of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word *Easter*—Anglo-Saxon, *Eastre*, *Eoster*; German, *Ostern*—like the names of the days of the week, is a survival from the old Teutonic mythology. According to Bede (*De Temp. Rat.*, c. xv) it is derived from *Eostre*, or *Ostāra*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, to whom the month, answering to our April—thence called *Eostur-monath*—

⁷⁴ See Greek text in ILT.

⁷⁵ BN, p. 181, commentary on Acts, 12:4.

⁷⁶ NBD, p. 330.

⁷⁷ WNWD, p. 456, s.v. Easter.

was dedicated. This month, Bede informs us, was the same as the “Mensis Paschalis,” when “the old festival was observed with the gladness of a new solemnity.”⁷⁸

According to Alexander Hislop, the Germanic goddess Easter (*Eostre*) originates with the Eastern pagan goddess Astarte:

Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven, whose name, as pronounced by the people of Nineveh, was evidently identical with that now in common use in this country [[England]]. The name, as found by Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is Ishtar. The worship of Bel and Astarte was very early introduced into Britain, along with the Druids, “the priests of the groves.”⁷⁹

This evidence demonstrates that certain late English Christian groups deliberately altered the name Phasekh to Easter in order to guise a pagan celebration as Christian, justifying their act by claiming they were giving the pagan festival a new solemnity.

Because of their merging of this pagan celebration with a scriptural doctrine, the pagan fertility cult practices of giving colored Easter eggs, the association of rabbits, and the observance of sunrise services all eventually found their way into the Phasekh observance.⁸⁰ The connection of Easter with eggs is an excellent example. The Syrian deity Astarte (called Ishtar by the Assyrians and Babylonians, Venus by the Latins, and Aphrodite by the Greeks)⁸¹ was the goddess of fertility. According to the ancient myth-teller Hyginus:

Into the Euphrates River an egg of wonderful size is said to have fallen, which the fish rolled to the bank. Doves sat on it, and when it was heated, it hatched Venus (Astarte), who later was called the Syrian Goddess.⁸²

The Druids bore an egg as the sacred emblem of their order.⁸³ The Egyptians and Greeks used eggs in their religious rites, hanging them up in their temples for mystic purposes.⁸⁴ Ptah, the Egyptian deity believed to have created all other deities and the world, is described as the being who turns the solar and lunar eggs on a potter’s wheel—the sun and moon likewise being manifestations of deities.⁸⁵ Therefore, the connection between the spring fertility goddess Astarte (Ishtar = Eastre = Easter) and the egg of Astarte, as well as the notion that eggs are somehow connected in pagan thought with

⁷⁸ EB, 1898, vii, p. 613, s.v. EASTER. Also see EB, 1910, viii, p. 828, s.v. EASTER.

⁷⁹ TTB, p. 103.

⁸⁰ AAO, pp. 253–259, 305–310; TTB, pp. 103–113.

⁸¹ See Sanchoniatho in Eusebius, *P.E.*, 1:10; MAR, 5, p. 19.

⁸² Hyginus, 197.

⁸³ MRD, p. 208.

⁸⁴ MCAE, 3, p. 20; Pausanias, 3:16:1.

⁸⁵ MAR, 12, pp. 144f.

the deities, has produced the Easter egg. The fertility reputation of rabbits resulted in the Easter bunny. The worship of Astarte (Venus), the goddess of the morning, and her husband, the sun deity Baal, developed into Easter sunrise service.

What do these things have to do with Yahweh's sacred festival days? Yahweh warns us not to celebrate the customs of the nations and the traditions of men.⁸⁶ These celebrations are "your *khagi*" and "your *moadi*;" they are not his. Even the perversions of Yahweh's festivals as practiced by the Israelites were condemned by Yahweh.

My *nephesh* hates your new moons (months) and YOUR *MOADI*. They are a burden upon me. I am tired of bearing (them).⁸⁷

I hate, I reject YOUR *KHAGI* (FESTIVALS), and I will not delight in YOUR FESTIVE ASSEMBLIES. For if you offer up to me burnt offerings, and your food offerings, I will not be pleased; and peace offerings of your fattened animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the sound of your songs, and the melody of your harps I will not hear.⁸⁸

These statements do not mean that Yahweh was against the Phasekh and days of eating unleavened bread. To the contrary, Yahweh lists the Phasekh and Khag of Unleavened Bread among "THE *MOADI* OF YAHWEH" and refers to them as "MY *MOAD*."⁸⁹ It was not Yahweh's festivals that were in question. Rather, it was man's interpretations and practices that corrupted Yahweh's festivals. We simply do not have any authority to make up our own festivals, regardless of how well-intentioned we assume ourselves to be.

Eucharist and Communion

Another corruption of the Phasekh festival, which we shall only mention in passing, is the later form of the Eucharist, also called "Communion," the Christian sacrament commemorating the messiah's Last Supper. The Eucharist is called, "The Passover Meal of the New Covenant."⁹⁰ The term Eucharist means "thanksgiving."⁹¹ Communion is the "fellowship" ceremony by which the Eucharist is shared.⁹²

The Christian Eucharist ceremony takes its lead from the Last Supper, where the messiah gave a blessing over the unleavened bread, broke it and gave it to his disciples. He then uttered the words, "Take, eat; this is my body,

⁸⁶ Jer., 10:1-3; Mark, 7:6-13; 1 Tim., 4:1-10; 2 Tim., 4:3f; Col., 2:8; Titus, 1:10-15; 1 Pet., 1:17f.

⁸⁷ Isa., 1:14.

⁸⁸ Amos, 5:21-23.

⁸⁹ Lev., 23:1-4, 37, 44. That מועדֵי (moadi) in Lev., 23:2, means "my *moad*," cf. LXX, loc. cit., "ἑορταί μου." *Moad* is used here as a collective noun, like Torah (Law) when referring to a body of *torath* (laws).

⁹⁰ NCE, 5, p. 595.

⁹¹ NCE, 5, p. 599.

⁹² NBD, pp. 245f.

which is broken on behalf of you; do this in remembrance of me.”⁹³ After dividing the bread, Yahushua took a cup of wine (though some would argue that it was only grape juice) and εὐχαριστήσας (*eucharistesas*; gave thanks). He then offered his disciples the wine to share, saying, “Drink all of it.” He defined the cup of wine by saying, “This is my blood, that of the New Covenant, which is poured out concerning many,” and “as often as you drink, do this for the remembrance of me.”⁹⁴

The mystery of the Eucharist, which was first revealed at the Last Supper, soon expanded from its original function as a part of the Phasekh supper and within a few decades was attached to regular services as well. Accordingly, every time that the Eucharist was offered, it became a type of the blessing and thanks given by Yahushua at his last Phasekh (i.e., the Last Supper before his death). In conjunction with this blessing and the giving of thanks, the sharing of bread and wine is performed in remembrance of the messiah’s death, which was required so that the New Covenant could be established. Even more to the issue at hand, the symbolism of these rites is directly connected with Phasekh, for the messiah was himself the Phasekh lamb that has been sacrificed for us.⁹⁵

At Communion (fellowship, sharing), bread and wine are used to recall the unleavened bread and wine taken during the Last Supper.⁹⁶ The Last Supper was the Phasekh meal eaten by Yahushua and his disciples just prior to the messiah being delivered up to the chief priests and subsequently suffering execution. This Eucharist ceremony is based upon a statement given by the apostle Saul to the Corinthians recounting the words of the messiah the night of his Last Supper, when he told his disciples to share in the bread and wine.⁹⁷

The idea of Communion has degenerated to a point where the original concept of simulating Phasekh has now almost totally been forgotten. In many churches communion is taken once a week, in some cases daily, as well as on special occasions. The idea of partaking of the bread and wine every week, and not just during the time of Phasekh, arose because of a loose interpretation of 1 Corinthians, 11:26, which reads, “For as often as you may eat this bread, and may drink this cup, the death of the sovereign you announce until he has come.” Because Saul made no specific command concerning the frequency of the reception of this bread and wine, many found in the term “often” an implication of a weekly service, if not daily.⁹⁸

As a result, instead of understanding this passage to mean that every time you observe the festival of Phasekh, and thereby partake of the unleavened bread and wine, you announce the death of the messiah, many Christian assemblies derived the meaning that they can partake of the bread and wine anytime they wish and announce the same purpose. As we shall demonstrate

⁹³ 1 Cor., 11:23f; Luke, 22:19; Matt., 26:26; Mark, 14:22.

⁹⁴ Matt., 26:27f; Mark, 14:23f; Luke, 22:20; 1 Cor., 11:25.

⁹⁵ 1 Cor., 5:6–8; cf., above n. 38.

⁹⁶ NCE, 4, pp. 37–41.

⁹⁷ 1 Cor., 11:25–27; cf., Matt., 26:26–30; Mark, 14:22–26; Luke, 22:19–20; NCE, 5, p. 595.

⁹⁸ NCE, 4, pp. 37f.

with the remainder of our study, this interpretation is not in holding with the intent of the Scriptures.

Conclusion

The Khag of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread is not properly a Jewish festival. Neither is it Easter nor the Eucharist at Communion. Rather, it is a *khag* belonging to Yahweh, given to us by a *קִדְשׁ* (*khoquth*; statute) from Yahweh, commanding us to celebrate it during its appointed time of the year. While the Israelites were in Egypt, and later under the Torah (Law), its celebration was meant to be a foreshadowing of coming events, including the death and resurrection of the messiah. Since the death and resurrection of the messiah, the questions now stand, “Are we to continue this annual celebration or is it a relic of the past?” and, “If we are to continue this practice, how and when do we correctly observe it?” Examining the evidence which decides these issues is the purpose of our study.