



First Two Days of Passover

The Haftarat of the first two days of Passover recount how two celebrations of the holiday, each at a moment of national transformation, renewed its commitment to its covenant with God. As recited on Day 1, Joshua’s celebration of Passover forty years after the Exodus renewed their covenantal connection to God and His Land before conquering it.

And as recited on Day 2, when Josiah, centuries later, revolutionized Judean society after generations of idolatry, the nation’s observance of Passover again demonstrated its recommitment to its eternal covenant with God.

First Day of Passover

Joshua 3:5-7¹; 5:2-6:1; 6:27

The Haftarah spans several major events as the Israelites’ Wilderness experience ends with their entrance into the Land: crossing the Jordan, mass circumcision, the Passover sacrifice, the cessation of manna, and the miraculous conquest of Jericho. These events reflect and fulfill their covenant with God, and strengthen their commitment to it. They also reenact the Exodus for a new generation who had not witnessed it four decades earlier.

The Haftarah’s first passage occurs as the Israelites prepare to cross the Jordan River, led by the Ark of the Covenant. The miraculous crossing, skipped in the Haftarah, solidifies the people’s awe for Joshua as God’s replacement for Moses. In the Haftarah’s main passage, Joshua leads a mass circumcision, a command which, along with the Passover sacrifice, had been neglected during forty years of punishment in the Desert. Entering the land (Ex 12:25; 13:5; 13:11, 14) and circumcision (Ex. 12:43; 12:48) are prerequisites for the annual Passover offering. Joshua then leads the people in making the first Passover in the Land. God then stops the manna, feeding them instead from the Land. This second passage concludes as Joshua encounters an angel representing God’s assistance in conquering Jericho. The Haftarah then jumps over that miraculous conquest to conclude with the conquest’s impact on Joshua’s reputation among Canaan’s nations, echoing its opening.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 3:5-7: While encamped at the Jordan River, Joshua tells the people to prepare for a miracle the next day. The priests carry the Ark before the people. The upcoming events will confirm Joshua as Moses’ successor.

Joshua 3:7	יהושע ג:ז
The Lord said to Joshua, “Today, I will begin to make you great in the sight of all Israel so they will know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”	וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחָלֵךְ בְּעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּן כִּי כַאֲשֶׁר הָיִיתִי עִם-מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ:

Verses 5:2-9: The Exodus generation was circumcised, but God punished them with death so they could not enter the Land. Their sons born in the desert were not circumcised, leaving them like uncircumcised Egyptians. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua fulfills God's command to circumcise these men, removing this disgrace.

Joshua 5:2	יהושע ה:ב
At that time, the Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives for yourselves and again circumcise the children of Israel, a second time.”	בַּעֲתֵהּ הָיָא אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עֲשֵׂה לָךְ חַרְבֹת צָרִים וְשׁוּב מִלְּאֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִיית:

¹ Chabad Hasidim and some Ashkenazi communities read these verses.

Verse 5:10: On the 14th of Nisan in Gilgal, the people offer Passover sacrifices.

Joshua 5:10	יהושע ה:י
The children of Israel camped in Gilgal. They made the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in Jericho's plains.	וַיִּחַנוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְגָל וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֵב בְּעֶרְבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ:

Verse 5:11-12: The next day, they begin to eat from the Land's produce, and in turn the manna ceases.

Joshua 5:12	יהושע ה:י"ב
The manna ceased the next day when they ate from the land's grain. The children of Israel no longer had manna. They ate the produce of the land of Canaan that year.	וַיִּשְׁבֹּת הַמָּן מִמַּחֲרֹת בְּאֲכָלָם מֵעֵבֹר הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא־הָיָה עוֹד לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִתְּבוּאֹת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא: (ס)

Verses 5:13-6:1: With the Israelites nearby, Jericho seals its walls. Joshua approaches a mysterious man with a sword who identifies himself as the captain of God's army. Joshua prostrates, removes his shoes at the angel's command, and asks the angelic captain for his message.

Joshua 5:15	יהושע ה:ט"ו
The [angelic] captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua: "Remove your shoe from your foot, for the place on which you stand is holy." Joshua did so.	וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂרֵר־צָבָא ה' אֱלֹהֵי־הוֹשֵׁעַ שֶׁל־גִּבְעֻלָּהּ מֵעַל רַגְלֶךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹמֵד עָלָיו קֹדֶשׁ הוּא וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כֵּן:

Verse 6:27: The subsequent miraculous conquest of Jericho demonstrates to all the Land's residents that God is with Joshua.

Joshua 6:27	יהושע ו:כ"ז
The Lord was with Joshua. His fame was throughout the entire Land.	וַיְהִי ה' אִתְּיְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיְהִי שְׁמֹעוֹ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

Connection

The Midrash describes **God's eternal appreciation of the mass circumcision** described in Haftarah.

Shir HaShirim Rabbah 4:6	שיר השירים רבה ד:ו
R. Levi said: When Joshua circumcised the Israelites, he piled up their foreskins into a hill. The sun shone upon them and they rotted. Their smell rose before the Holy One, Blessed be He. It[s odor] was as pleasant as [the Temple's] incense, and like a handful of myrrh on [its altar's] fire. At that moment, [God] said, "When the descendants of these [people] come to sin and do evil acts, I will remember this smell for them, be filled with mercy upon them, and transform [My] attribute of Judgment to [My attribute of] Mercy." What is [R. Levi's reason for saying this]? "I [God] will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." (Song of Songs 4:6)	רבי לוי אמר בשעה שפיל יהושע את בני ישראל העמיד להם ערלותיהם גבעה, וזרחה עליהם חמה והתליעו, ועלה ריחן לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא כריית קטרת סמים וכריית קמץ של לבונה שעל גבי אשם, באותה שעה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לכשיבואו בנייהם של אלו לידי עברות ומעשים רעים אני נזכר להם ריח זה ומתמלא עליהם רחמים והופך להם מדת הדין לרחמים, מה טעם אלה לי אל הר המור ואל גבעת הלבונה.

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Second Day of Passover

2 Kings 23:1-9,21-25

Born into an idolatrous, immoral society under his grandfather King Menashe, King Josiah ascended the throne at eight years old after his father, King Amon, was assassinated. He began to return to God and, at age eighteen, instructed the priests to repair the Temple, where they found an ancient Torah scroll. Upon hearing its words, Josiah weeps and rends his garments, fearful of its terrifying punishments for the nation's generations of idolatry. The prophetess Huldah confirms the people's coming fate, adding that Josiah's righteousness will prompt God to delay punishing them until after his death.

The Haftarah describes the revolution that Josiah and his allies nonetheless undertook to return the nation to compliance with the covenant and avoid their fate. First, he assembles all of Judah to Jerusalem and reads the "scroll of the covenant" before them; they join him in the covenant. Then, they reverse generations by obliterating idolatry throughout Judah; the Haftarah skips some of these events. Finally, Josiah instructs the people to make Passover "as written in this book of the covenant".² For these mighty efforts to renew Judah's covenant with God, the Bible describes Josiah as the Jewish people's greatest [repentant king](#).

Haftarah Breakdown

[Verses 23:1-3: Josiah assembles the entire population of Judah to Jerusalem, reading them the covenant from the newly found scroll in the Temple. Josiah and the people rededicate themselves to the covenant with God.](#)

II Kings 23:3	מלכים ב כ"ג:ג
The king stood by the pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, testimonies, and statutes with all [their] heart and all [their] soul, to uphold the words of this covenant that were written in this book. The entire people stood [to accept] the covenant.	וַיַּעֲמֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־הָעַמֹּוד וַיַּכְרֵת אֶת־הַבְּרִית הַלִּפְנֵי ה' לְלֶכֶת אַחֵר ה' וְלִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־עֲדוּתָיו וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתָיו בְּכָל־לֵב וּבְכָל־נַפֶּשׁ לְהִקְיִם אֶת־דְּבַר הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת הַכְּתוּבִים עַל־הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה וַיַּעֲמֵד כָּל־הָעָם בְּבְרִית:

[Verses 23:4-8: Josiah leads a comprehensive campaign to destroy a wide variety of idols and idolatrous shrines throughout Judah, including in Jerusalem, its environs, and the Temple.](#)

II Kings 23:4	מלכים ב כ"ג:ד
The king ordered the high priest, Hilkiah, the secondary priests, and the keepers of the [Temple] door, to remove from the Lord's Temple all the vessels made for [the god] Ba'al and for the [idolatrous] Asherah [rite], and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and removed their ashes to Bethel.	וַיִּצְוֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־כַּהֲנָי הַמְּשֻׁנָּה וְאֶת־שֹׁמְרֵי הַסֵּף לְהוֹצִיא מִהֵיכַל ה' אֵת כָּל־הַכֵּלִים הַעֲשׂוּיִם לַבַּעַל וְלְאַשְׁרָה וְלְכָל צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּשְׂרָפֵם מִחוּץ לְיְרוּשָׁלַם בְּשַׂדְּמֹת קִדְרוֹן וַיִּנְשָׂא אֶת־עַפְרָם בֵּית־אֵל:

[Verse 23:9: Josiah disqualifies Jewish priests who served idols from officiating in the Temple but permits them to eat priestly food.](#)

II Kings 23:9	מלכים ב כ"ג:ט
Nevertheless, the priests of the [idolatrous] altars did not come up to the Lord's altar in Jerusalem- although they ate [sacrificial] unleavened bread among their brethren.	אָךְ לֹא יָעִלוּ כַּהֲנֵי הַבַּמֹּזֶז אֶל־מִזְבֵּחַ ה' בִּירוּשָׁלַם כִּי אִם־אָכְלוּ מִצֹּאת בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵיהֶם:

² 2 Chr. 25:1-19 further describes this Passover celebration in great detail.

Verses 23:21-23: Josiah leads the people in celebration of the greatest Passover since Joshua's time.

II Kings 23:21	מלכים ב כ"ג:כ"א
The king commanded the entire people, saying, "Make Passover unto the Lord your God, as is written in the book of the covenant."	וַיִּצְוֵה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-כָּל-הָעָם לֵאמֹר עֲשׂוּ פֶסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כַּכְּתוּב עַל סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה:

Verses 23:24-25: As inspired leader of these great reforms, Josiah is the greatest repentant Biblical king.

II Kings 23:25	מלכים ב כ"ג:כ"ה
No king before him was like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might according to all the Torah of Moses - and after him [no king] arose like him [, either.]	וְכִמֹּהוֹ לֹא-הָיָה לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁב אֶל-יְהוָה בְּכָל-לִבּוֹ וּבְכָל-נַפְשׁוֹ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדוֹ כְּכָל תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא-קָם כָּמֹהוֹ:

Connections

Josiah and the people stood when dedicating themselves to the Torah's covenant. Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried records a custom that **those present when a baby boy enters the covenant of circumcision should, similarly, stand.**

Kitzur Shulchan Arukh 163:2	קיצור שלחן ערוך קס"ג:ב
It is customary that all present at a circumcision stand, as (II Kings 23:3) states, "All the people stood in the covenant," except the sandek who holds the baby while seated. After the father recites the blessing, "to bring [the baby] into the covenant [of Abraham]" and those assembled answer "amen," they all say, "Just as [the baby has now] entered the covenant, so may he [one day] enter into [the study of] Torah, the wedding canopy, and [the performance of] good deeds!"	נוהגין שכל העם שאצל המילה עומדים, שנאמר, ויעמד כל העם בברית, מלבד הסנדק שהוא תופס את התינוק, והוא יושב. ולאחר שברך האב להכניסו וענו אמן, אומרים כלם, בשם שנקנס לברית, כן יכנס לתורה ולתפאה ולמעשים טובים.

Josiah's disqualification of **Jewish priests who served idols** from serving in the Temple is extended in Halachah, which **bans them from offering the Priestly Benediction.**

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing 15:3	משנה תורה, הלכות תפילה וברכת כהנים ט"ו:ג
A priest who worshiped idols, whether under compulsion or in error, even if he repented, may never lift his hands [i.e., recite the Priestly Benediction.] This accords with (II Kings 23:9), "Nevertheless, the priests of the [idolatrous] altars did not come up [to the Lord's altar in Jerusalem." This is because (Deuteronomy 10:8)] likens the Priestly Benediction to the Temple service, "To minister unto Him [at His house] and to bless in His name." Similarly, a priest who converted to idolatry, even though he repented, may never lift his hands [i.e., recite the Priestly Benediction.]	כהן שעבד כוכבים בין באנס בין בשגגה אף על פי שעשה תשובה אינו נושא את כפיו לעולם שנאמר (מלכים ב כג ט) "אף לא יעלו פהגי הבמות" וגו'. וברכה פעבודה היא שנאמר (דברים י ח) "לשרתו ולברך בשמו". וכן כהן שהמיר לעפושם אף על פי שהתור בו אינו נושא את כפיו לעולם.

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