

Passover and the wall of partition

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The institution of Passover

- Exodus 12:43-49:
 - And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.”

A seeming contradiction?

- It states here that no foreigner may eat the Passover sacrifice and if they wanted to, they had to be circumcised.
- This seems to be at odds with the attitude G-d expressed in regards to the other related feast, that of the Unleavened Bread (which was the 7 day festival).
 - Exodus 12:17-20 “And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.”
- What is different about the sacrifice?

Gentiles and the Temple

- Ezekiel 44:6-14
 - “And say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations, in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple, when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You have broken my covenant, in addition to all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep my charge for you in my sanctuary. Thus says the Lord GOD: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple and ministering in the temple. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before the people, to minister to them. Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their punishment. They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my holy things and the things that are most holy, but they shall bear their shame and the abominations that they have committed. Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its service and all that is to be done in it.

Gentiles and the Temple

- We see G-d here admonishing Israel and her priests for allowing Gentiles into the Temple, not only in a spiritual sense, but in a physical, literal sense (in the flesh).
- We can learn from here, that during the days of the Old Testament, while Gentiles were allowed and expected to participate in certain aspects of Israelite custom, they were forbidden to enter the Temple as Gentiles.
- We see here that the “wall of partition” was not merely a social construct the Jews created, as a result of a sense of pride and superiority. It was very much a part of the Torah itself, and it was even commanded by G-d!
- The Passover was merely an illustration of a wider principle. The sacrifice required the worshipper to go to the Temple, which for a Gentile was forbidden. Hence they were forbidden to bring the sacrifice.

Hope for the Gentiles?

- So, according to the Old Testament, were the Gentiles always doomed to a second-class status in terms of access to G-d?
- Even in the Old Testament, there were hints of a greater role for Gentiles:
 - Isaiah 56:3-7 “Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, the LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Hope for the Gentiles?

- Zechariah 14:16-21

- “Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the LORD.” And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

Hope for the Gentiles?

- It seems like it was the plan of G-d to extend his Presence toward all nations, as a continuation of the redemption of the world that G-d planned after the expulsion of mankind from Eden. G-d revealed Himself first through the nation of Israel, but His salvation will eventually spread to the Gentiles too.
- Isaiah 49:5-6
 - “And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honoured in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— he says: It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Hope fulfilled in Jesus

- Ephesians 2:11-21

- “Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.”