

The Passover Parable

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“The Passover Parable”

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Introduction

Jesus constantly spoke in parables, dramatizing His message in parabolic pantomime. (See “The Parabolic Pantomimes of Jesus Christ,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) In so doing, He was merely continuing the practice of the Old Testament prophets whom God often directed to state their message symbolically in pantomime (Jer. 51:63; Ez. 4; Hos. 1:2). The parabolic pantomimes of Scripture vary, but all have one thing in common. Whether it be the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice by his father Abraham (Gen. 22), the death of Moses (Num. 27:12–14), or the confrontation of the prophets of Baal by Elijah (1 Kings 18), they were all conducted at God’s behest.

The greatest of Scripture’s parabolic pantomimes, however, is the intricately detailed set of directives God issued through Moses to the People of Israel before, during, and after their Exodus from Egypt. Viewed as a complete image, this pantomime appears to be nothing more than a mockery of the ancient Egyptian belief in the Pharaoh’s triumphant journey through death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension from the top of the primeval Mountain of God, the pyramid.

Considered in detail, however, the pantomime of the Passover Parable is an incredibly labyrinthine message concerning Jesus Christ, the coming King of Israel. Unlike the Pharaoh who could never actually triumph over death, Jesus Christ would triumph. He would arise in the resurrection and, in a parabolic pantomime of His own, ascend from a mountain into the sky, just as the Egyptians believed the Pharaoh did after death. But as the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ would also give His life to protect those whom He leads out of bondage, through death, and into the resurrection.

The Passover Parable provides the underpinning that ties together not only the message of the Pentateuch but the entire message of Scripture as well. It reveals that Moses wrote concerning Jesus Christ, just as Jesus stated in His challenge to the Jews who were persecuting Him:

“If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.”
(John 5:46)

To understand the message that lies hidden in the Passover Parable, however, you must begin to think like an ancient Egyptian. For that is exactly how the ancient Israelites who came out of Egypt thought, and they fully understood the message of the Passover Parable.

Hebrews, Canaanites, or Egyptians?

Lay Christians sometimes speak of the People of Israel who came out of Egypt and accepted the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai as though they were “Jews.” That is a common misnomer. But the Jews as a people and Judaism as a religion came into existence nearly one thousand years later, during the diaspora, after Nebuchadnezzar had sacked and burned Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C. and had taken the Israelites captive to Babylon. Only then did the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually give up Canaanite idolatry and seek the God of their fathers alone. With that, Judaism and the people known as the Jews were born.

Another common misconception is that the Sons of Israel who lived in Egypt prior to the Exodus (Ex.

1–11) worshipped the God of the Bible in the same way they did after the divine revelation came through Moses. That is a misconception only because prior to the giving of the Law at Sinai, these people had no definitive knowledge of the God Who is. Although it has not been fully appreciated, God's revelation of Himself to the patriarchs was not for the purpose of establishing a religion; it was to give them the promise of a future inheritance. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*.)

So what did the People of Israel whom God delivered from Egypt actually believe? The answer to this question is not only pertinent, it is absolutely crucial to an accurate understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures. Only after answering it can we fully understand what God did in establishing the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai as the precepts of an entirely new religion (Ex. 20:1ff.).

Scholars have customarily used the names that ancient people gave their children to determine what gods they worshipped, since the ancients often gave their children theophoric names containing the name of their favorite god. If you look at the personal names in the census list found in the first two chapters of Numbers, it's obvious that the allegiance of the descendants of Israel who came out of Egypt was firmly fixed on El Shaddai, the name by which God had revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 17:1; 26:23–25; 28:3–4; 35:9–12). Nearly seventy percent of the names in that census list contain either El or Shaddai as a prefix or suffix. Consider these names: Elizur, Zurishaddai, Nathanel, Eliab, Elishama, Gamaliel, Ammishaddai, Pagiell, and Eliasaph (Num. 1:5–15).

But what did these people actually know about El Shaddai, the God who had appeared so briefly to their ancestors four hundred years earlier? Little if anything in actual fact. They knew from the Canaanite religion that the God El was the head of the Canaanite pantheon. (See M. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 1955.) They also knew that Jerusalem was the principal city where the Canaanite god El had been worshipped by the Jebusites in Abraham's day (Gen. 14:17–24). Even the writer of the Book of Hebrews agrees that the god worshipped by Canaanites in Jerusalem was, in fact, God Himself (Heb. 7).

It was not coincidence that the God of the Bible revealed Himself to the patriarchs by identifying Himself as a god with whom they were already famil-

iar—El, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon. He was simply speaking to them in terms they could understand. But He did so fully intending to use imagery from the Canaanite mythology to teach their descendants, the Israelites, truths about Himself.

Was God actually the chief god among many other Canaanite gods? Of course not. He plainly states there are no gods other than Him (Deut. 4:35, 39). But it is always easier to take something that is known and understood and use that to teach about something that is not known or understood. That is exactly why God identified Himself to the Patriarchs as the Canaanite god El. Having done that, He could teach the Israelites four hundred years later how He differed.

To the Canaanites, the god El was the creator of all things, "the creator of heaven and earth." He was the "father of the gods." He ruled over all the gods as the "eternal king" or "king of eternity." His title as king was "Bull El." El's authority included the right to depose other gods and establish as king those gods he favored. Only at the decree of El, for example, could the Canaanite god of wisdom, Kothar-wa-Hasis, "build the house" of the Canaanite god of resurrection, the storm-god Baal. ("Build a house" is a Hebrew idiom with specific meaning. See *Not All Israel Is Israel* and various articles in *The Voice of Elijah* as well as forthcoming volumes in The Resurrection Theology series.)

According to Canaanite mythology, El lived in a tent on a mountain, at or near which was a river that served as the place for the judgment of the dead. The "assembly" of the gods met on this mountain, in El's tent. There they discussed matters relevant to his reign as king. (See E. T. Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods*, p. 147.) After the gods had discussed an issue, El made his decree from the mountain. His decree then became the law of the gods.

At the time of the Exodus, however, the People of Israel were familiar not only with the doctrines of Canaanite religion, but also with those of Egyptian religion. For over four hundred years they had lived in Goshen (Gen. 45:10; Ex. 8:22), an area in the northeastern Nile delta where the culture and religions of both Canaan and Egypt were in constant flux. The gods of both Canaan and Egypt were worshipped there.

Although they had continued to worship the Canaanite god El as the personal god of their clan for over four hundred years, the People of Israel who came out of Egypt were all too familiar with the gods and

goddesses of the Egyptian religion. So it should not surprise us to discover that in revealing Himself to the People of Israel, God not only used the images related to the Canaanite god El, He also compared Himself to, and contrasted Himself with, the principal god of the Egyptian religion as well.

The Myth of Osiris

For over three thousand years Osiris, the god of the blessed dead, was the Egyptians' most important god. From the Pharaohs who built the massive pyramids as their tombs, down to the ordinary peasant villager buried in a pauper's grave, every pious Egyptian was concerned with attaining resurrection from the dead. And all together looked to the god Osiris as their great hope.

The primary sources of information concerning Osiris are the Pyramid Texts (texts found written on the tomb walls in the pyramids), the Coffin Texts (texts found written on coffins) and the Book of the Dead (a burial papyrus prepared for a high-ranking Egyptian official). The purpose of these texts was to assist the dead in their travels through the realm of the dead, and thereby improve their chances for entry into the resurrection. The primary concern of these texts, therefore, is with the events that take place between the time of one's death and the moment of resurrection. They do not provide a coherently written myth about the exploits of Osiris, however. For that, we must look elsewhere.

The only knowledge we have of an Egyptian mythology behind the above mentioned texts actually comes from Greek writers. The Greek writer Plutarch, about the middle of the first century A.D., produced the most complete account of the myth. Plutarch's purpose in writing was to provide Greeks with information that would help them understand the Egyptian preoccupation with death and resurrection. According to Plutarch, Osiris was an ancient Egyptian king who was murdered by his enemy, Seth, who sealed him in a box and dumped the box into the Nile. The box floated out to sea and eventually washed ashore along the coast of Lebanon. But Isis, Osiris' wife, searched for the box, and after finding it, brought the body of Osiris back to Egypt.

Soon afterward, however, Seth found the corpse of Osiris and cut it up into fourteen pieces, scattering

them throughout the land. When Isis began gathering the members of Osiris, her son Horus engaged his father's murderer in battle.

Isis soon completed the task of gathering Osiris, and Horus defeated Seth. Horus then applied the magic necessary to (as the texts say) "open the mouth" of his father Osiris, thus providing him entry into the resurrection. Thereafter, Osiris ruled in the west as king of the resurrected dead.

Egyptian Symbolic Ritual

Only recently have Egyptologists begun to appreciate the sophistication of ancient Egyptian theology. Not so long ago, many scholars thought it should be categorized as the product of primitive, "prelogical" thinking (W. F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 122ff.). The unstated premise was that mankind's ability to engage in logical thinking somehow began with the Greeks in the fifth century B.C.

As recently as 1961, a leading scholar in the field of Egyptology rather scathingly termed the Egyptian religious tradition a "vast accumulation of mythological rubbish inherited from the past" (A. H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 227). His remarks are a comment on the fact that the Egyptians never seemed to discard any formulated religious thought, no matter how much it might appear to contradict some other religious conception. The sky, for example, was depicted in artists' renderings as supported by a goddess who looks much like she is doing push-ups. In other depictions, however, the sky was shown as being held up by four pillars at the four corners of the Earth. If you didn't like either of these explanations, there were others.

But the postulations of scholars in past years are demeaning to the accomplishments of the ancients and without basis in actual fact. They stem from their misunderstanding of the intentions of the ancient Egyptian theologians. The Egyptians had already concluded that the other realm was a "tremendous mystery" (V. Tobin, *Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion*, p. 21ff.). It was beyond intellectual comprehension. In that, they seem to agree with modern philosophers who contend that it is impossible to even think about God without placing limitations on Him.

Since the ancient Egyptians thought an intellectual understanding of the other realm was not possible, they used symbols to represent it. So the sky could be

supported by a goddess, or it could be held up by four pillars. It didn't matter that the symbols appeared to contradict one another because the only purpose of the symbol was to describe some particular feature of the unknown by means of the known.

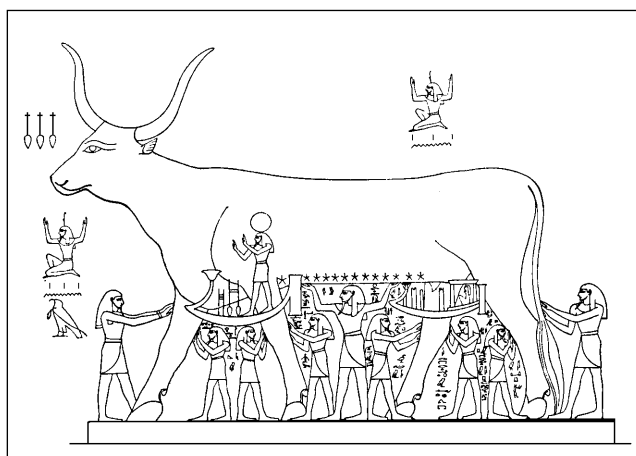
Having understood the purpose of the Egyptian symbols, Egyptologists now realize that, when combined, the two distinguishing characteristics of ancient Egyptian religion—ritual and symbol—explain far more about the beliefs of the Egyptians than has heretofore been recognized. That's because the Egyptians believed that by conducting symbolic religious rituals, they could influence the outcome of events in the other realm.

An appropriate example of the Egyptians' use of ritual and symbol is the burial ritual conducted after the death of the Pharaoh. After the body of the king had been embalmed and mummified to protect it as much as possible against decay, it was carried in procession down to the Nile and placed on a boat. The boat then carried the body across to the western bank of the Nile. Once across the Nile, the body was led in procession to the base of the Pharaoh's pyramid tomb where priests conducted enigmatic magical rites that were supposed to "open the mouth" of the deceased king. These rites enabled him to be resurrected.

Finally, they laid the mummified body of the king to rest in the pyramid. There it awaited the reunion of spirit, soul, and body after the soul had successfully made its way through the realm of the dead (A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 320ff.). The ceremonial symbols of this ritual include, among other things, the Nile, the boat, the magical rites, and the pyramid. These were all intended to represent geographical features and events in the other realm. But to fully understand them, you must first understand the theology of Osiris as it pertained to the Pharaoh.

Pharaoh—Son of God

The ancient Egyptian Pharaoh was, in this life, revered as the son of god. He was Horus, son of Isis and Osiris. When he died, he passed into the realm of the dead with the setting sun. He passed through the underworld, the Egyptian version of hell, to the foot of the Mountain of God, where he was judged. After being found guiltless, the Pharaoh ascended the Mountain and became one with his father, Osiris, who



The Egyptian theologians also conceived of the sky as the underside of the Cow of Heaven, the goddess Hathor. In this depiction, the cow's belly is supported by the air-god, Shu. The sun-god Re is standing in his solar boat as it moves through the stars of the heavens. The ancients thought the sun-god made his circuit through the heavens and the underworld in a boat because they believed the Earth was surrounded by water—the sea above and the sea below.

In keeping with this widespread belief, the Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is normally translated "heaven" is a compound word that literally means "sea of waters." Likewise, the Hebrew word for the realm of the dead—Sheol—is also a compound word. It means "sea of El." The Israelite Prophets of God mocked this and other ludicrous conceptions in their prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus Christ by appropriating them for their own purposes.

then ascended to heaven to assume the throne as the king of Heaven.

According to Egyptian mythology, the deceased Pharaoh always attained the resurrection. He thus provided opportunity for resurrection to ordinary Egyptians who sought resurrection in and through him. Any Egyptian believer who successfully attained the resurrection did so by becoming one with Osiris, the Pharaoh who had died and had been resurrected.

In the burial ritual described in the last chapter, the Nile represented the obstacle presented by the "sea" in the underworld. By transporting the deceased king's body across the Nile, the priests intended to ensure that his soul safely crossed the "Sea of Reeds" in the underworld. The boat that carried the body corresponded to that of the divine boatman whose services the deceased's soul must acquire when it reached the "Sea of Reeds."

The magical rites performed at the base of the pyramid represented the corresponding rites that must take place in the other realm after the deceased's soul crossed the "Sea of Reeds." Only after Horus, the

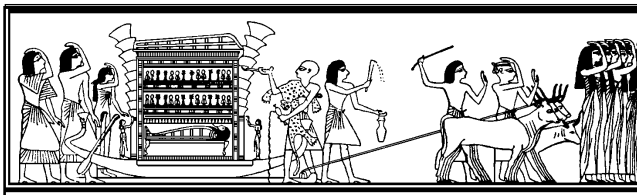
recently deceased Pharaoh, had defeated Seth, the serpent or monster that lived in the sea, could he “open the mouth” of his father Osiris. Finally, the pyramid represented the primeval Mountain of God from which the newly resurrected king ascended to take his place among the stars of heaven as king of the blessed dead.

The Journey Through Death

There was apparently no definite sequence to the events that the Egyptians thought took place in the realm of the dead. So for ease of understanding we will use the sequence God used in the Passover Parable.

By conducting the ritual burial of the deceased Pharaoh’s body in this life, the Egyptians sought to ensure the safe passage of his soul through death. But they still believed that the journey was fraught with danger all along the way. During his journey through death, the deceased Pharaoh, who was Horus, son of Osiris while alive, proved himself to be Osiris, the first-born of the gods, by hunting down and killing all other first-born in the realm of the dead. As you can see from the following, the Pharaoh (Unas in this particular text) was assisted in this by other gods:

Unas hath weighed his word with the hidden god who hath no name, on the day of hacking in pieces the first-born. . . . Khonsu the slayer of the wicked cutteth their



The drawing above replicates one found on the tomb of a high Egyptian official at the beginning of the 19th Dynasty (ca. 1300 B.C.). The deceased is depicted as the god Osiris lying on the boat and held upright in front of the funerary stela at the tomb.

The scene depicts the actual burial ritual, but also symbolically represents events that must occur in the afterlife. The priest holding the mummy upright before the funerary stela, for example, is dressed as the dog or jackal-god Anubis who was the guardian of the tomb. Anubis protected the mummy against the evil forces of the night. The crossing of the Nile in the boat is not shown in this drawing but is depicted in other similar drawings.

The mountain shown rising out of the picture to the right of the pyramid-like tomb is intended to represent the cosmic Mountain of God from which the deceased will ascend into the resurrection. The two eyes over the tomb were meant to symbolically represent that the

throats and draweth out their intestines for it is he whom Unas sendeth to slaughter; and Shesmu cutteth them in pieces and boileth their members in his blazing caldrons of the night. . . . The mighty ones in heaven light the fire under the caldrons where are heaped up the thighs of the first-born . . . Unas is the first-born of the first-born gods.
(E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, p. 94)

This ritual killing of the first-born seems to have been identified with the destruction of the damned in the realm of the dead. That was accomplished soon after midnight (Budge, p. 144). After killing all other first-born, however, the soul still required assistance to successfully navigate the underworld since:

The only certain means of traversing the Dead-land in safety was to obtain the services of some benevolent god or gods, who knew the roads, and could act therefore as trustworthy guides ...
(*Ibid.*, Budge, p. 256)

The underworld was, in some parts, a hot, dry desert; in other parts, it was swampy marshlands. But even though the divine guide led the deceased soul along the “right way” through the realm of the dead, the soul must always pass through a treacherous region known as the “Sea of Reeds” or the “Field of Reeds.” The “Sea of Reeds” was a marshy area subject to flooding, so its designation varied depending on its



two eyes of Horus, the sun and the moon had been restored after the “eye of Horus,” the moon, was lost in Horus’ battle with Seth, the enemy of his father Osiris.

Only after the moon had been restored could the deceased enter into the resurrection. God used the loss of the moon, i.e., the three day “dark of the moon,” to speak concerning the “three day” interval between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That Moses also knew of God’s intention can be seen by his mention of Israel’s need to make a three day journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to God (Ex. 8:27). In actual fact, the journey to Mt. Sinai took the Israelites at least two months (Ex. 19:1).

The three day journey between time of death and resurrection also lies behind Jesus’ statements concerning the “sign of Jonah” (see Matt. 12:39; 16:4). We will discuss the connection between this belief and covenant sacrifice in future publications.

condition at the time the soul of the dead arrived. If the water level was low, the guide would lead the dead soul along the only way through the "Field of Reeds" (Pyramid Text 822). But when the area was flooded, it became the "Sea of Reeds," and the deceased soul required the services of a god who could provide a ferry or a boat for crossing (Pyramid Text 1188). An alternate means of passage, however, was by the "parting of the waters," so the deceased could cross unharmed (J. Towers, "The Red Sea," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 18, 1959, p. 152, n. 19).

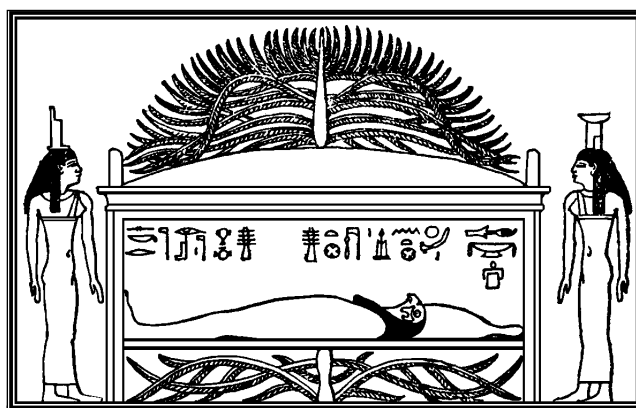
As he moved through the "Sea of Reeds," the recently departed soul bathed in its waters, performing a baptismal ceremony to purify himself of uncleanness. While doing this, he recited the following:

I am the essence of a god, the son of a god, the messenger of a god; I have come that I may bathe in the Field of Rushes and that I may go down to the Field of Kenzet. The Followers of Horus cleanse me, they bathe me, they dry me, they recite for me "The Spell for Him who is on the Right Way," they recite for me "The Spell of Him who ascends" and I ascend to the sky.
(Pyramid Text 920–922)

As this passage alludes, just beyond the "Sea of Reeds" lay the desired destination of the deceased, the "House of Osiris." This "House" corresponded to the temple at the base of the pyramid in this life. But as we stated above, the pyramid represented the primeval Mountain of God in the next. So the "House of Osiris" in the realm of the dead was at the base of the cosmic Mountain of God. And only by being judged righteous could the deceased Pharaoh gain entry to the "House of Osiris." But having gained entry, he could then climb the mountain and ascend to heaven from the top of the Mountain of God.

The Passover Parable

The ancient Egyptian burial ritual and the Egyptian theological concepts concerning the death and resurrection of the Pharaoh combine to provide the basis for the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable. In directing the *parabolic pantomime* of the Exodus and wilderness wandering of the People of Israel who came out of Egypt, God intentionally conducted much more than just a gigantic mimicry of the



The deceased Pharaoh is depicted as the god Osiris lying in his Funeral Coffin beside the Erica tree. The goddesses Nephthys and Isis stand at either end as the protector goddesses of coffins and canopic jars. The Erica tree represents the "flourishing" of the god Osiris in the resurrection. Different kinds of trees were planted around the pyramid complex as symbolic representation of the Pharaoh's resurrection and new life on the Mountain of God.

The resurrected king was thought to dwell on the Mountain of God in the Garden of God as the Tree of Life. (See "The Image of the King as a Tree," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991, and G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, 1951.)

The belief that the soul of the deceased came back to life in a tree was a prevalent belief throughout the ancient Near East. (See A. J. Evans, "Mycenean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901), pp. 99–203.) The soul of the deceased was thought to live in a tree planted by the tomb. Sacred groves and stone slabs (the original tombstones) were often associated with the worship of the dead. The Prophets of God condemned the ancient Israelites for engaging in such idolatrous worship. Jeremiah is the most direct, condemning those Israelites:

"Who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' And to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'"
(Jeremiah 2:27)

Pharaoh's burial procession. It was a mocking, taunting denial of all that pious Egyptians believed concerning the possibility of the Pharaoh's resurrection to new life after death. Focusing His wrath on the ancients' belief in resurrection, God first told Moses to publicly proclaim to the Pharaoh that Israel, not their famed god Osiris, was the "first-born of god:"

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord,' 'Israel is My son, My first-born. So I said to you, 'Let My son go, that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.'"
(Exodus 4:22–23)

In having Moses make this declaration to the Pharaoh, God was announcing that He, not Osiris, was

the Supreme Ruler of the realm beyond. It was a direct challenge to the Pharaoh's divinity as Horus, son of Isis and Osiris. But then God demonstrated in symbolic ritual—*parabolic pantomime*—that "all Israel" was the first-born of the god of the dead by destroying all the first-born in Egypt except Israel (Ex. 12:29–30). This happened at midnight, at the time when the Egyptians thought the killing of the first-born took place in the realm of the dead. It is obvious that "all Israel" together is considered to be God's "first-born" since Moses sternly warns the Israelites that:

"None of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite."

(Exodus 12:22b–23)

Why would God demand that every Israelite stay inside when only first-born sons in the land of Egypt were being killed? The youngest female child in an Israelite family should not have been threatened by the destroyer. She could never be mistaken for a first-born son. The reason is because "all Israel" together—not individual Israelites—was God's first-born. Therefore, any member of Israel would qualify as part of the "first-born" targeted by the destroyer. It was just as Moses told Pharaoh:

"Israel is My Son, My First-born."

(Exodus 4:22b)

After the annihilation of the first-born proved that Israel alone was the divine "first-born of the first-born" who qualified for resurrection, God presented Himself to Israel as the divine guide Israel needed to show them the "right way" through the realm of the dead (Ex. 13:21–22). And just as the Egyptian theology stated, by following the guidance God provided, Israel soon came to the "Sea of Reeds" (Ex. 13:18; 14:2)

Many students of the Bible are not aware that the original text of the Hebrew Scriptures states that Israel crossed the "Sea of Reeds," not the "Red Sea." That's because the "Red Sea" has maintained its currency in translations since it first appeared in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet it

could hardly have been in the original Hebrew since even the Latin Vulgate has the correct "Sea of Reeds" translation.

Speculation abounds as to what body of water the Israelites actually crossed when coming out of Egypt. It is not my purpose here to propose a definitive answer. Whatever or wherever the "Sea of Reeds" was, however, it was obviously one of the many sacred lakes throughout Egypt that represented the underworld "Sea of Reeds." That is demonstrated by the fact that God tells Moses to:

"camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea."

(Exodus 14:2b)

Baal-Zephon can hardly be anything but a sacred area dedicated to the Canaanite god Baal, a god who, like Osiris, was believed to have died and risen again. The second part of the compound—*zephon*—is actually the name of Baal's mountain, *Zaphon*. (See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) That fact indicates that there was a mountain, or at least a small rise that could represent a mountain, in the vicinity of the "sea" that Israel crossed. That mountain was intended to represent the cosmic Mountain of God belonging to the god Baal which lay beyond the "Sea of Reeds" in the realm of the dead.

In accordance with the unique Egyptian theological tradition concerning the deceased's crossing of the "Sea of Reeds," God parted the waters so that Israel passed through unharmed (Ex. 14). Yet instead of continuing the *parabolic pantomime* with Israel at the Mountain of Baal near the "Sea of Reeds," God ignored the mountain of the god Baal which was associated with the sacred "Sea of Reeds" Israel had just crossed. He led Israel on to Mt. Sinai, a mountain in the desert meant to represent His own mountain, the cosmic Mountain of God on which the ancients believed the gods dwelt.

In bypassing Baal-Zephon, God also dismissed Baal's claim to the title of "god of the resurrection." He would later, through the Prophets, make much of this initial contemptuous affront to Baal's power and ability to effect the resurrection on behalf of his worshippers. But at the time of the Exodus, it was enough to simply ignore the patron deity of the sacred "Sea of Reeds" through which He had just led His People.

The Tent of El

The Passover Parable is a powerful statement of God's purpose in His incarnation in the Person of Jesus Christ. But we have here only sketched with large strokes its basic outlines. In leading Israel out of Egypt, through the "Sea of Reeds" and on to the Mountain of God, God made one simple but powerful statement in the symbolic language of the religion the Egyptians knew and understood:

"When Israel, My First-born Son, dies, it is He, not your Pharaoh, who will triumph over death, hell and the grave, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. He will then declare His triumph over death by ascending from the Mountain of God to become King of Heaven."

The only part of this statement that remains to be shown is how Jesus Christ came to be Israel. I have already explained how that is in *Not All Israel Is Israel*—the first volume in The Resurrection Theology Series.

We have dealt briefly with just a few of the images that God used to teach the Israelites about Himself and His plan of salvation. Those images were taken from the Egyptian beliefs concerning resurrection. But when the Israelites reached Mt. Sinai, God began to correct their beliefs concerning this doctrine as well as their assumptions concerning Himself as the Canaanite god El. Through Moses, God taught the Israelites the requirements that must be met if they intended to enter the resurrection. He did so not just with symbolic imagery from Egyptian religion, but also with images taken from Canaanite religion. One of those images was the tabernacle.

God had already identified Himself to the Patriarchs as the Canaanite god El. But at Mt. Sinai He began to teach the Israelites more about Himself as the one true God, the God He revealed Himself to be through the name Yahweh or Jehovah (Ex. 3:13–15). Since the Canaanite god El lived in a tent on the Mountain of God—the tent in which the Assembly of the gods met—God told Moses to construct a tent, a tabernacle if you will, like the one he saw on the mountain:

"You must erect the tabernacle according to its design that was shown you on the mountain."
(Exodus 26:30)—my translation

It is clear that God intended the Israelites to view this tent as the equivalent of the tent of the Canaanite god El in which the Assembly of the gods met. It is called the "Tent of Meeting." The Hebrew/Canaanite term translated "meeting" in this phrase is also used to describe the "meeting" of the gods in the tent on El's mountain in the Ugaritic literature from Ras Shamra.

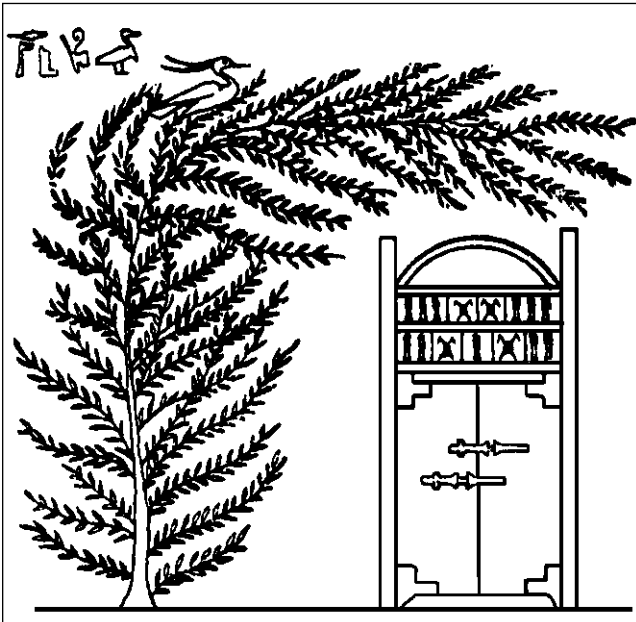
But the "Tent of Meeting" is only one of many symbols in the Old Testament that God used to communicate His message to the ancient Israelites. When fully understood, that message describes in amazing detail the person and work of Jesus Christ—the true Israel, First-born of God. We will see just how in future volumes in The Resurrection Theology Series.

Conclusion

The People of Israel understood the Passover Parable because it spoke in the religious symbolism they knew and understood. Moses also explained to them what God was doing (Num. 12:6–8). Perhaps the most striking indication that the Israelites understood the *parabolic pantomime* of that first Passover can be found in Miriam's "Song of the Sea":

"Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, The place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever."
(Exodus 15:17–18)

Miriam understood the imagery of that first Passover and the Exodus from Egypt. The People of Israel expected to continue on to the cosmic Mountain of God where the deceased king, Israel, would be "planted" as the living Tree of Life in accordance with the understanding common to all ancient Near Eastern religions. (See "The Image of the King as a Tree," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) Unfortunately for those who came out of Egypt at that time, God had other plans. For when they reached God's mountain, God told them they could not even touch the mountain, much less climb it to ascend in the resurrection (Ex. 19:10–15). Then God began to teach them the requirements that must be met if one intends to enter into the resurrection from the dead. That *Teaching*—the Torah (the Hebrew term *torah* means "teaching")—provided



The deceased Pharaoh is depicted as the god Osiris lying in his Funeral Coffin beside the Erica tree. The goddesses Nephthys and Isis stand at either end as the protector goddesses of coffins and canopic jars. The Erica tree represents the "flourishing" of the god Osiris in the resurrection. Different kinds of trees were planted around the pyramid complex as symbolic representation of the Pharaoh's resurrection and new life on the Mountain of God. The resurrected king was thought to dwell on the Mountain of God in the Garden of God as the Tree of Life. (See "The Image of the King as a Tree," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991, and G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, 1951.) The belief that the soul of the deceased came back to life in a tree was a prevalent belief throughout the ancient Near East. (See A. J. Evans, "Mycenean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901), pp. 99-203.) The soul of the deceased was thought to live in a tree planted by the tomb. Sacred groves and stone slabs (the original tombstones) were often associated with the worship of the dead. The Prophets of God condemned the ancient Israelites for engaging in such idolatrous worship. Jeremiah is the most direct, condemning those Israelites:

"Who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' And to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'"
(Jeremiah 2:27)

The Teaching that informed the Early Church through the revelation of the Old Testament's concealed message that Jesus gave His Apostles (Lk. 24:45). (See also "Where Are Jesus' Disciples?" *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) Moses told the Israelites to pass along to future generations *The Teaching* they had heard (Deut. 6:4-15). But they failed to do so because rebellious Israelites went their own way and distorted God's *Teaching*, teaching instead things that came from their own minds.

Jesus Christ restored *The Teaching of Moses* by revealing it to the Apostles, telling them to pass it on to the next generation. He even established the discipling method whereby they were to accomplish that. (See "Where Are Jesus' Disciples?" *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) But the Church did exactly what Israel had done. They distorted the truth concerning God's works and His Word. Less than a century after the death of the Apostles, *The Teaching* was again lost.

God is now at work "restoring all things" concerning *The Teaching*. But He is not requiring that we pass it along to the next generation. It is much too late for that. As Jesus said:

"This generation will not pass ..."
(Matthew 24:34b)

Those who hear must use what they hear to save themselves. And those who have ears to hear will hear. But remember Lot's wife. ■