

PASSOVER UNCOVERED

We have all seen arguments back and forth about Passover – should it be at the start of the 14th, or on the 15th ? In the course of research into the biblical calendar I came across something that for me and others has clarified the true calendar and the Passover together.

It was in the study of how the early Christian Celtic Church started their new year that I came across the information that for some 600 years after Christ's death, the British Celtic Church of God kept Passover on the full moon. "According to the law, the Passover had to be sacrificed on the fourteenth or full moon." (P.91 The Celtic Church in Britain – Leslie Hardinge). Having seen this stated in other sources such as Britannica too, the question was, where in the law was this required ?

For many years the significance of Psalm 81 has lain hidden. Commentaries influenced by the Rabbinical Jews have suggested this psalm refers to the Fall festivals, but this is to deny its obvious repeated references to God's action on the Passover to free the Israelites from slavery.

It doesn't help too that the King James version contains a mistranslation of verse three : "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day." However, most modern versions put this right, for example the NIV "Sound the rams horn at the new moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast ", or the New KJ, "Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the Full moon, on our solemn feast day."

In fact, the word "appointed" in the KJV is Strong's no 3677 :- " 'kece' or keceh; from 3680 prop. Fulness or the full moon, ie its festival :- (time) appointed." This is backed up by Brown-Driver-Briggs who add reference to the same usage in Proverbs 7:20 where modern versions also provide "full moon."

So, the trumpet was to be blown at the new moon, "and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast," verse 4, "This is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob." This ordinance is found in Numbers 10:10 "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets" "Solemn" here is the Hebrew word moed, used in Leviticus 23 for the "feasts", or holy convocations of God. One of these 'solemn days' is of course Passover (Lev 23:5).

But how do we know that psalm 81:3 refers directly to Passover ? This is made clear in verse 5 ; " This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony" The marginal reference in the King James here refers us to Psalm 78:5 to tell us what this testimony was. "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children." What must be made known ? Verse 12 - The "Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt...."

When and what should the fathers relate to their children ? Ex 12:24-27 " And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service ? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped." This is made even more certain by the next phrase in Psalm 81:5 , "when he went out through the land of Egypt". Notice again the marginal references in the King James, first to Ex 11:4-5 , "And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt : And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die."

The next marginal reference shows God went out "against" the land of Egypt.

So, what event does this Psalm picture ? What deliverance was ordained for a testimony to their children, when

shall be unto you for a memorial: and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

According to Psalm 81 Passover must fall on the full moon, and that is on the 14th of the month. Numbers 28:16 “And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord.” The full moon was first visible this new year on the evening of Thursday 28th March, the true Passover night. Astronomically the moon is only “full” for seconds and will be visible on only one evening. Friday 29th was then the 14th of Abib. The **first** day of Abib this year was 14 days earlier, on Saturday 16th March, which is why members of the Abib Expedition were able to stand on the roof of a hotel in Jerusalem on the previous evening, after finding abib barley widely over the land of Israel, to witness the first sighting of the new moon, which would begin God’s new year !

No wonder we can find no reference to the Feast of Tabernacles in this psalm, for here God is making it plain that Passover must fall on the full moon. It cannot be observed on the 15th for then it would be no longer full. Nor can the month start with the dark new moon (conjunction or molad) for if this were so the moon would be several days away from being full on the 14th.

Only when all God’s calendar instructions are honoured can it all come together and all the pieces fit. Psalm 81, I believe, provides the missing piece of the puzzle, for all of us who are looking directly to the word of God to understand the timing of Passover.