

2. The First Passover

Sacrifice: a Gift fit for God

1. Quick recap for early listeners
2. Prepared questions
3. Exercise: a challenge from Rillera
4. The Cross and the Mass: have we finished our task?

Recap

the problem

- The Israelites are given a strange ritual to do on the night of the Tenth Plague
- It is hard to explain why all these details come together.
- There are hints in the text appealing to other Israelite sacrificial practices
- There are hints in the text appealing to natural signs

the solutions

1. It is a memorial of the Exodus, and this is just when they are taught the ritual
2. The blood of the lamb is part of a warding ritual
3. The blood of the lamb makes God/Destroyer think the house is done
4. God is using the event to prophecy the Crucifixion
5. The Passover is a composite burnt offering, covenant-sealing and purification ritual

Preparation questions

1. Hugh (the tutor) proposes that the original Passover ritual is a composite burnt offering, purification, and covenant-sealing ritual. Did you have any *questions* about this solution?
2. Did you have any *quibbles* or concerns? Anything it needs to address but does not? Any objections of any kind?
3. In the readings suggested below are some alternative interpretations. Do you think any of these are *sufficient*, and so make the case in the lecture, redundant?
4. Do you think any of them *add* something important to the interpretation given in the lecture?
5. Do you have any questions left over?

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Challenging this interpretation/defending it

In the readings suggested below are some alternative interpretations. Do you think any of these are *sufficient*, and so make the case in the lecture, redundant?

Rillera 2024...

1. What does Rillera assume/claim about the category of “sacrifice”? Why/does it matter?
2. Is there a practical justification for any instructions which can preserve my interpretation?
3. Are there details of the ritual which Rillera’s interpretation does not explain?
4. Does it matter if the First Passover is not an *olat*?
5. What can we learn about the First Passover from how it develops?
6. What can we learn about Israelite sacrifice from its development?

Challenging Me

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Strictly speaking, however, the ritual prescribed in Exod 12:1–23 for the first Passover is *not* a sacrifice. Not only is the first one not called a “sacrifice” (*zebah*), it cannot be one by definition because there is no priest and no altar (thus none of it can be burned and translated into smoke to produce a “pleasing aroma” for God).⁵² Moreover, the fact that the first Passover was categorically not a sacrifice solves a longstanding interpretive conundrum caused by a discrepancy between the instructions in Exod 12:8–9 to roast the meat directly over fire and *not* “boil” (*bāšēl*) it and the contradictory instruction in Deut 16:7 to “boil” (*bāšal*) the meat. All *sacrificial* meat that is eaten by humans needs to be boiled (*bāšal*, e.g., Exod 29:31; Lev 6:28; 8:31; Num 6:19; 1 Kgs 19:21; Ezek 46:20, 24; Zech 14:21; 2 Chr 35:13). Roasting *sacrificial* meat for human consumption is sacrilege (1 Sam 2:12–17). This is because only God’s portion is to be in direct contact with the fire, whereas the portions allotted for human consumption requires mediating objects between it and the fire (a boiling pot and water).⁵³ Ronald S. Hendel concludes that “an essential difference that separates the humans from their God” is enacted through these distinct modes of ritual “cooking.”⁵⁴ While “both the Israelites and Yahweh share in the consumption of the sacrificial animal” and “in this sense the deity and the people are joined,” there nevertheless remains a distinction between God and humans because “they consume different portions that are prepared differently” — “the human portion

Challenging Me

is boiled while Yahweh's portion is burned."⁵⁵ Since cooking sacrificial meat in the same manner God's portion is "cooked" is sacrilege (1 Sam 2:12-17), then the requirement to cook the Passover over a direct flame indexes it in a non-sacrificial category. By repeating the instruction to roast the meat and explicitly prohibiting boiling in Exod 12:8-9, it almost seems as if the author is waving their hands wildly shouting: "*The first Pāssover was not a sacrifice!*" There is no priesthood yet, there is no altar, and they cooked it in a non-sacrificial manner. Everything about the first Passover is categorically not a sacrifice.

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However, the author notes that each *subsequent* Passover will be celebrated as a “sacrifice” (*zebah*, Exod 12:27) when it is incorporated into the sacrificial and calendrical framework. The verbal form *zābah* is used throughout Deut 16:1–8 (“*sacrifice* the Passover”) because now there is an ordained priesthood, a sanctuary, and an altar upon which the fat is to be burned and whose sides the blood is to be dashed on.⁵⁶ And this is then why Deut 16:7 specifies that the Passover needs to be “boiled” since it is now categorized as a “sacrifice” and thus the portions for human consumption have to be boiled and cannot be in direct contact with fire. So there is no real contradiction between Exod 12:8–9 and Deut 16:7 since the difference in cooking instructions function to index the Passover differently in its different contexts (from the last meal before the exodus to a memorial of the exodus incorporated within Israel’s liturgical calendar). That is, the function of “roasting” in Exod 12 necessarily indexes it outside of the sacrificial system (and having non-priests sacrifice, let alone sacrifice without an altar for the fat and a portion of the meat to be burned up for God, would be a major cultic problem); whereas since Deut 16 is incorporating Passover within the sacrificial calendar, the instructions need to index it accordingly by changing the manner in which the meat is cooked. “Boiling” the meat for human consumption is the necessary way to indicate that it is now a “sacrifice” because it matches how sacrificial meat is prepared for human consumption.

Passover in ~8 AD

Actions of the Liturgy

1. Choose a spotless male lamb.

- 10th day of Nisan (month 1).
- No disease or injury.
- One for each group big enough to eat it all in one night.
- Look after it at home for four days.

2. Kill the lamb.

- 14th Day of Nisan
- Do not break a bone while killing it: slit its throat and collect the blood for...

3. Spread the blood of the lamb.

Sundry equipment

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- A house with a doorframe
- A “spotless” **lamb** (goat or sheep) without disease or injury
- A father and son, and enough extended family to eat the lamb in one meal
- A very sharp knife
- A branch of *ezov*: a kind of oregano in the ANE.
- Your staff, your travel cloak, and your shoes on.

the food

- roast **lamb**: at least one olive-sized piece for everyone.
- “Bitter herbs”. No species universally agreed on now.
- Flatbread. Absolutely no risen bread or yeast allowed!

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3. Spread the blood of the lamb.

- Use a branch of hyssop leaves to paint it on the top and sides of the doorframe.
- Everyone must stay inside until morning.

4. Eat the lamb.

- Roast the whole lamb. Don't break any bones.
- Roast it with "bitter herbs".
- It must all be eaten that night.
- Any leftovers should be burnt to "go up in smoke"
- Eat it ready to leave immediately: flatbread (no time for dough to prove), staff in hand, cloak in belt, shoes on.



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5. Repeat this ritual to remember God's mercy

- Teach your children what it means by repeating set words Yahweh/Moses will give, to say when the meal is eaten.
- All Israelites must eat this meal on 14th Nisan. Non-Israelites must become members if they want to join in. (This requires a different sacrificial ritual: **circumcision**. Don't draw that.)



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The Cross and the Mass

Application

- Scripture and tradition identify Jesus as the Lamb of the New Passover
- This only tells us why Jesus died (and what the Mass is for) if we know what the First Passover did
- The First Passover is structured to allow the whole family/laypeople to co-offer the burnt offering of the Lamb; and to use the Lamb's blood to seal a covenant and purify sin
- This can explain why Jesus needed to be sinless, and He needed to die in a specific way to make it clear what He was.

Complications

- Differences between Jesus' Passion and Crucifixion, and the Passover, can be explained by practical constraints, and Jewish Legal constraints
- The ritual purposes are jammed together, which Leviticus does not do.
- The Passover is established permanently, but Jesus changes it.
- God gave the Israelites other rituals from the Passover. Why?

HDB: let's consider where the cultic rules come from and Who they are subject to...