

Should We Kill a Lamb for Passover?

by Larry and June Acheson

June and I have attended several Passover observances where a lamb was killed for Passover. To be frank, our presence at these observances was somewhat on the reluctant side because we weren't really sure of which way to lean. Some are quick to say that it should have been an easy decision to stay away, but there are a number of "pro" arguments in favor of killing a lamb for Passover that served to at least help us understand that the motives of those who kill a lamb for Passover (at least the ones we have associated with) are pure. This is something that I believe we should all consider before we openly attack or otherwise harshly criticize those whose views don't necessarily square with our own. Let's take a balanced approach as we examine this controversial topic.



Included among the difficult-to-argue-against claims presented by those in favor of killing a lamb for Passover is the fact that the Passover sacrifice, unlike the priestly sacrifices, was instituted in Egypt and was not considered a "sin" sacrifice. Keep in mind that sin offerings and guilt offerings, as outlined in the book of Leviticus, were not to be eaten by regular folks, but by the priests only (Lev. 6:24 - 7:9). The Passover sacrifice, in contrast, was eaten by Torah-observant Israelites (presuming the males were circumcised). Since we understand that the Passover sacrifice is not a sin offering, it doesn't seem like such a bad thing to do, at least not when viewed from this perspective.

Another argument in favor of killing a lamb for Passover is the fact that this offering was not originally designated as a priestly function, or at least it was not an act that was required to be carried out by the Levitical priesthood. After all, if you read the story of the first Passover (Exodus 12), you will find that each individual household was to kill a lamb on Abib 14. Even first-century Jewish theologian Philo wrote:

Now at other times the daily priests (chosen) from the people, being appointed for the slaughtering and taking care of them, performed the sacrifices. But at the Passover, here spoken of, the whole people together is honoured with the priesthood, for all of them act for themselves in the performance of the sacrifice.¹

So if the Passover lamb is not regarded as being a sin offering ... and if this sacrifice is something that was carried out by individual households instead of the Levitical priesthood, then certainly we can see that it is not your "typical" sacrifice.

¹ Philo of Alexandria, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, Book I, translated by Ralph Marcus, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1970 (first printed in 1953), p. 18.

The Messiah Our Passover is Sacrificed for Us - Does This Mean No More Passover Lambs Are to Be Sacrificed?

We were recently copied on an e-mail in which the sender wanted to know of any locations where she could go to attend a Passover gathering in which a lamb would be killed. Her seemingly innocent request generated a negative response from a man who asked, “*Why? Isn't Yeshua's passover sacrifice good enough for you? 'Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even the Messiah our passover is sacrificed for us,' 1 Cor. 5:7.*”

The above question seems like a tough one to answer; however, those who believe that we should kill a lamb for Passover have a response. They would answer that they can see why one might regard 1 Corinthians 5:7 as an indication that, since the Messiah our passover has been sacrificed, this means no more lambs should be killed for Passover. However, all Messianic believers agree that Yeshua is our Passover lamb who was sacrificed for us. Does Yeshua's fulfilling the Passover sacrifice mean that no more lambs should henceforth be killed for Passover? Those who support killing a lamb for Passover might answer that if such is the case, then what would need to be included with 1 Corinthians 5:7 would be the words " ... therefore we no longer need to offer lambs for the passover sacrifice."

Several years ago, a friend sent us an article in which the author promotes killing a lamb for Passover. The author had already been confronted by individuals who pointed out what they felt was a lack of understanding on his part with regard to the proper interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:7. In his article, he addressed their reasoning as follows:

Finally, I would like to address a few of the arguments used against keeping the Passover according to Exodus 12.

Paul's statement in I Cor. 5:7-8 that "Messiah is our Passover" is one of the most often used passages to justify not killing a lamb. Many will argue that since Paul stated that Yeshua is our Passover he replaced the ordinances given in Exodus 12. A close examination of this passage will show otherwise. In this passage, Paul is using an analogy to show that Messiah typifies the Passover just as sincerity and truth typify unleavened bread. Using the same line of reasoning that many use to say we don't need to slaughter a lamb, one can say we don't need to eat unleavened bread since sincerity and truth replace it. Certainly those who do not kill a lamb based on this passage wouldn't suggest that we eat leavened bread during the feast!²

We believe the author's point, based on the wording of 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, is valid. Before we go any further, let's take a look at this passage:

⁶Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

⁷Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Messiah our passover is sacrificed for us:

⁸Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

² From “Are We Correctly Observing Passover?” by an anonymous author, p. 2. Although the article is not dated, it was mailed to us in August 2003.

When I view the above passage from the perspective offered by those who kill a lamb for Passover, I understand and appreciate their reasoning. From their perspective, no Torah-observant believer would dare to suggest that we literally substitute unleavened bread with "sincerity and truth" during the Feast of Unleavened Bread; in the same way, why should we take Paul's words to mean that the sacrifice of Yeshua as the true Passover lamb must prove that no more lambs are to be offered at Passover?

Here, I believe, is the perspective offered by those who kill a lamb for the Passover: In ancient times Yahweh instituted the killing of a lamb on Abib 14, knowing that this innocent creature represented and pointed to His yet-to-be-born Son, who would be the fulfillment of the innocent "Lamb" who suffered, bled and died for the sins of the world in our place. Just as those lambs represented the One who was to come, the lambs killed today point backwards to that same True Lamb, not as a substitute, but as a reminder of what a tremendous sacrifice was made at Calvary. Those who have witnessed the slaying of a lamb for Passover understand the heart-wrenching experience of witnessing the life being drained from such an innocent creature and are reminded of the great price that the True Lamb paid for our deliverance from the bondage of sin, as well as how the Passover sacrifice demonstrates Yahweh's great love for us.

The perspective of those who believe we should kill a Passover lamb, if I understand it correctly, is something like this: If it wasn't wrong in the *past* to kill a lamb that represented the future redemption of mankind, is it wrong in the *present* to kill a lamb that represents and causes us to more deeply reflect upon the redemption (passing over) that was given to us both by the deliverance from bondage in Egypt and the deliverance from the bondage of sin by Yeshua's offering of Himself?

When we put all of this information together, we can now see that there are at least three factors that might seem to support killing a Passover lamb:

1. Killing a lamb is a remembrance (memorial) of the True Lamb, whose shed blood delivers us from bondage. In killing the lamb, we are reminded of His sacrifice, which delivers us from the bondage of this world. His kingdom, as we know, is not of this world.
2. The Passover sacrifice was never classified as a sin offering.
3. The original Passover sacrifice was performed by individual households instead of by the Levitical priesthood.

While I'm sure I've left out some factors influencing various believers to kill a lamb for Passover, the above reasoning serves as what we remember hearing.

Where Is the Passover Lamb to Be Slaughtered?

Another area of concern lies with *where* we are to kill the Passover lamb, and it is this concern that has prevented June and me from ever deciding to kill a lamb for Passover, nor can we endorse such a thing at this time. Since this is such a critical factor for us, and since it has also been an area of concern for other believers, we have decided to address this particular aspect of the Passover sacrifice here in this newsletter. For those of you already familiar with the ordinances of Passover observance, we will jump right to the text in which we read of "where" the Passover lambs may be sacrificed. Shown below is Deuteronomy 16:5-6:

⁵Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which Yahweh thy Almighty giveth thee:

⁶But at the place which Yahweh thy Almighty shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

This passage is the source of a great deal of controversy between those who believe we should sacrifice a lamb at Passover and those who believe we should not. The gist of this directive is that we are not to sacrifice the Passover lamb in just any place that we deem suitable. Rather, it must be a place of Yahweh's own choosing -- the place where He Himself chooses to place His name. That place is none other than Jerusalem. It seems that several folks in this day and age are of the opinion that this command can somehow be spiritualized and that when we read that where two or three are gathered in Yeshua's name, He is there (Matt. 18:20), this means that Yahweh's name is automatically "placed" in that location. In fact, some believers have used this reasoning to impute sin to June and me for keeping a feast at home instead of going to some feast gathering that has been approved or designated by some modern-day "elder." We address this line of reasoning in our study "[Is It a Sin to Stay Home During Yahweh's Feasts?](#)"

If Yahweh has truly given authorization for any designated "elder" to determine that Yahweh's name is in a certain place, then it must be okay to place Yahweh's name in *many* places -- instead of "**the**" place that is designated in Torah. In effect, those who teach that Yahweh's name is now wherever an "elder" so determines are effectively teaching that there has been a change in the law. Is this true? Are we now required to attend a feast gathering at an "elder-approved" site? Again, we address the answers to these questions in our study titled "[Is It a Sin to Stay Home During Yahweh's Feasts?](#)" and we believe the answer to both questions is, "No." The evidence from Scripture shows that Yahweh has chosen Jerusalem and until we see that it has been "unchosen" with another city (or cities) designated in its place, it is the only place where the Passover lamb can be offered.

Proponents of sacrificing a lamb for Passover do present an argument to our reasoning; surprisingly, their defense of killing a Passover lamb includes a show of support that Jerusalem is still Yahweh's chosen place for killing the Passover lamb. However, since many of us are now "too far" from Jerusalem, they are persuaded that we can kill the lamb wherever we choose. The following comes from the article "Are We Correctly Observing Passover?":

The other major argument against killing a lamb for Passover is found in Deut. 16:5, 6, where Yahweh tells them not to kill within their gates but to kill the Passover where Yahweh chooses to place His name. The argument goes something like this, "Since Yahweh placed His name in Jerusalem, that is the only place where we may kill the lamb." Or "Since we don't know where He has placed His name, we cannot slaughter the lamb."

The problem with that argument is that if we are going to use it for not killing the lamb then we also must use it for all of the feasts. In Deut. 16 we are commanded to appear before Yahweh three times during the year in the place where He chooses. If we don't know where to kill the lamb, then we don't know where to keep the feast. We are commanded to do both, so what is the answer? The answer is that during that time if you lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem you had to keep it there. **If you were far away, you were to keep it where you lived.** I've come to this conclusion for two reasons. The first being that the early

messianic believers were scattered all over the Roman Empire and it would have been impossible if not extremely difficult for believers to travel to Jerusalem three times a year. There is good evidence that the apostle Paul did not keep every feast in Jerusalem. The second reason is a comment made by Josephus on Deut. 16 which indicates this command applied to those who lived within the bounds of Israel.³

We are persuaded that there are several inaccurate remarks in the above commentary, not the least of which we highlighted for you. Where in Scripture are we ever told, "If you are too far from the place where Yahweh has chosen to place His name, keep the festival where you live"? There are none that we are aware of and the author chose to not validate his conclusion with a supporting text of Scripture. We do not feel that the need to validate potentially controversial statements of this nature can be emphasized enough, and the author seems to have elected to insert an authoritative, yet certainly controversial, piece of information that, if true, would drastically change the tenor of this discussion. Without the benefit of Scriptural documentation, the reader is left to either just take his word for it or do as June and I are doing by questioning the accuracy of the remark.

At this point in our study, we feel it is appropriate to demonstrate that, by Scriptural command, the first Passover sacrifices -- performed in Egypt as the precursor to the Plague of the Firstborn -- were carried out in a vastly different manner than the subsequent Passover sacrifices were. This fact, which we are about to demonstrate, provides what we feel may be a vital link that is missed by those who currently believe we should kill a Passover lamb each year. If you read the instructions for keeping that very first Passover (Exodus chapter 12), you will notice that each household was instructed to keep the lamb until the 14th day. They weren't given instructions about *where* to kill the lamb for that very first Passover observance. However, once the Israelites departed Egypt, a directive was given pertaining to *any* sacrifices performed by the Israelites. That directive is found in Leviticus chapter 17:

¹And Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying,

²Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This is the thing which Yahweh hath commanded, saying,

³What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp,

⁴And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto Yahweh before the tabernacle of Yahweh; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people:

⁵To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto Yahweh, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto Yahweh.

⁶And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of Yahweh at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto Yahweh.

⁷And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.

⁸And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or

³ Ibid, p. 2.

sacrifice,

⁹And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto Yahweh; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.

The instructions in Leviticus chapter 17 were given during the Israelites' first year of having departed Egypt. This passage makes it clear that any sacrifices performed by the Israelites going forward were to be brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. When the tabernacle was eventually replaced by the temple, the sacrifices were to be brought to that location. No mention is made of what to do if you happened to be "too far" from the tabernacle or, later, too far from the temple. No provision was made for offering sacrifices in distant lands, yet the above author presumes that if you are simply too far from the tabernacle/temple, you can designate your own sacrificial site. Based on the instructions found in Leviticus 17, his solution is unscriptural.

The danger in the above author's approach lies in the fact that he is assuming a sacrificial alternative to the door of the tabernacle/temple, even though none is mentioned. In fact, verse 7 strongly implies that if any should deviate from the mandate given in Leviticus 17, sacrifices made anywhere other than the door of the tabernacle constitute "sacrifices unto devils."

Numbers chapter 9 actually addresses what should be done if a Torah-observant believer is far away from the tabernacle/temple and wants to observe Passover. Does this chapter offer a provision for killing a Passover lamb in whatsoever distant city the believer happens to find himself? No; rather, the believer is instructed to observe Passover in the *second* month (presuming he is back in Israel by then):

⁹And Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying,

¹⁰Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, if any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or *be* in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto Yahweh.

¹¹The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, *and* eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

The provision made for the Israelites who are "out of pocket" at the time of the first Passover observance is *not* to offer a lamb in whatsoever location they happen to find themselves; rather, it is to forego the observance of the first month and observe it at the tabernacle/temple during the *second* month.

Where Do We Keep the Feasts?

Now that we have established "where" the Passover lamb is to be sacrificed, we can address other concerns found in the study "Are We Correctly Observing Passover?" What about the argument that if you cannot determine where to kill the lamb, then we cannot determine where to keep the feast? Let's take another look at the following reasoning:

The problem with that argument ["Since we don't know where He has placed His name, we cannot slaughter the lamb"] is that if we are going to use it for not killing the lamb then we also must use it for all of the feasts. In Deut. 16 we are commanded to appear before Yahweh three times during the year in the place where He chooses. If we don't know where to kill the

lamb, then we don't know where to keep the feast. We are commanded to do both, so what is the answer? The answer is that during that time if you lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem you had to keep it there. If you were far away, you were to keep it where you lived.

For those who believe we should keep the feasts, we agree that the reasoning as expressed above has merit. Sadly, as we addressed in our study "[Is It a Sin to Stay Home During Yahweh's Feasts?](#)" there are individuals and groups out there who teach you that unless you find an "elder-designated" feast site to gather for the appointed festivals, then you are sinning. In actual fact, *they* are the ones who are missing the mark because they have taken it upon themselves to usurp Yahweh's authority by determining of their own volition "where" Yahweh has placed His name. Only Yahweh establishes "where" His name is placed, and Scripture repeatedly specifies that Jerusalem is that place. Here are just a few:

*... Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever. --
2 Chronicles 33:7*

*Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised
in the city of our Sovereign, in the mountain of his holiness.
Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,
is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King ...
the Almighty will establish it for ever. Selah.
--Psalm 48:1-2 & 8.*

*For Yahweh hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.
-- Psalm 132:13*

We have encountered some believers who maintain that Jerusalem is not presently the place where Yahweh has chosen to place His name. To be sure, Jerusalem has had its share of calamities, and from what we hear there aren't currently many righteous believers in that city. So does this mean we can arbitrarily decide that some *other* location is where the Almighty's name should be placed? Our answer is no. Scripture doesn't offer us an alternative place, and since Jerusalem *was* Yahweh's chosen place, and since it *will be* His chosen place, we feel safe in presuming that unless we are specifically told otherwise, it is *still* the place where Yahweh has chosen to place His name. As an example of what we mean, during the Babylonian Captivity, when Jerusalem was utterly forsaken by Yahweh, no one argued that His name had been placed in Babylon, nor is there a record of groups of believers assembling in Babylon to kill a Passover lamb. When the 70-year captivity ended and the temple was rebuilt, the sacrifices resumed. We are persuaded that this same parallel exists today.

A believer who refers to himself as an "elder" recently held a feast in the state of Tennessee, and he expressed the opinion that, based on his decision to hold the feast there, which was presumably based on the authority he feels he has been given from Yahweh, that his chosen feast site was a "chosen place." He believes that Jerusalem, on the other hand, is no longer chosen and that it is now regarded as Sodom (Revelation 11:8). Of course, he is free to believe as he wishes, but I decided to check the crime statistics of the city where he kept the feast and it turns out that property crimes are higher there than average for cities in that state. So although Yahweh hasn't designated any city other than Jerusalem as the place where He has chosen to place His name, this elder feels he has been given the authority to make such a

determination; yet, even by Tennessee standards, the city he chose would not exactly earn an "All American City" award!

For those of us who commemorate Yahweh's festivals, the question arises as to how we obey the command in Deuteronomy 16:16, where all males are instructed to go to the place chosen by Yahweh (note: chosen by *Yahweh*, not men). If we can understand that Jerusalem is the place chosen by Yahweh, then we should similarly understand that we here in the United States cannot reasonably be expected to go to Jerusalem three times a year. The expectation, then, is limited to those who live in the land of Israel. This expectation is implied in such verses as Number 9:10, where an individual who is on a journey during the first month of the year is not expected to keep the Passover in Jerusalem. However, presuming he will be back home by the second month of the year, he instead observes Passover during that second month. What if he has no way of making it back to Jerusalem?

Josephus also understood that only residents living in the land of Israel were expected to participate in feast observances. In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Flavius Josephus expressed his understanding that the commandment to observe the festivals in Yahweh's chosen place is restricted to those living in the land of Israel:

Let those that live as remote as the bounds of the land which the Hebrews shall possess, come to that city where the temple shall be, and this three times in a year, that they may give thanks to the Almighty for his former benefits, and may entreat him for those they shall want hereafter; and let them, by this means, maintain a friendly correspondence with one another by such meetings and feasting together, for it is a good thing for those that are of the same stock, and under the same institution of laws, not to be unacquainted with each other; which acquaintance will be maintained by thus conversing together, and by seeing and talking with one another, and so renewing the memorials of this union; for if they do not thus converse together continually, they will appear like mere strangers to one another.⁴

Notice that Josephus did not write that those who lived outside the bounds of Israel are expected to keep the feasts "where they are," as expressed by the author of "Are We Correctly Observing Passover?" Does this mean that those who do not live within the land of Israel are exempt from being required to keep the feasts? Well, yes it does. This having been said, we wholeheartedly support *commemorating* the feasts to the best of our abilities, including abstaining from regular work on the holy days. Certainly, if we can also meet with others during these times, it is a great opportunity for strengthening and building relationships as well as growing in a deeper knowledge of Yahweh's ways. However, based on what we understand from Scripture, it is not for us to arbitrarily declare a remote locale as "Yahweh's Approved Feast Site" or otherwise regard it as a place where He has placed His name.

As suggested by the author of "Are We Correctly Observing Passover?" the same thing that applies to the feasts applies to killing the Passover. Killing a Passover lamb is only sanctioned at the place where Yahweh has placed His name. To presume that Yahweh has now expanded that mandate so as to encompass *any* city designated by men is just that -- a presumption at best. At worst, it is regarded by Yahweh as a "sacrifice unto devils."

⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book IV, ch. VIII, sect. 7.

The author of "Are We Correctly Observing Passover?" listed two reasons for why he believes we are required to kill a lamb for Passover, even though we may not live in the land of Israel. Let's review those reasons one more time:

If you were far away, you were to keep it where you lived. I've come to this conclusion for two reasons. The first being that the early messianic believers were scattered all over the Roman Empire and it would have been impossible if not extremely difficult for believers to travel to Jerusalem three times a year. There is good evidence that the apostle Paul did not keep every feast in Jerusalem. The second reason is a comment made by Josephus on Deut. 16 which indicates this command applied to those who lived within the bounds of Israel.

We have already explained why neither of the above two reasons can rationally be considered as valid, but this would be an excellent opportunity to summarize them. First, the fact that early Messianic believers were scattered doesn't validate foregoing the Torah requirement to kill the Passover lamb in Yahweh's chosen place. We are persuaded that it is rather unbecoming of believers otherwise bent on obeying Torah to bend the Torah instructions so as to expand the "place" where Yahweh has placed His name to "places" where He has placed His name.

We should not overlook the author's commentary about the Apostle Paul not keeping each and every feast in Jerusalem. We agree that the Apostle Paul did not keep every feast in Jerusalem. We are persuaded that some folks misinterpret the mention of festivals as being references to "festival observances" rather than time markers. For example, we do not read that the Apostle Paul literally observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread with all its rites and ceremonies while in Philippi, although we are persuaded that he did the best he could (Acts 20:6). Did that include killing a Passover lamb in Philippi? We are not told, but if he did, he certainly did not comply with the Torah instructions that we have previously mentioned and we know from Paul's own testimony that he did not sin against the law of the Jews (Acts 25:8). Since we are not told what the Apostle Paul did during his stay in Philippi, we can only presume at best. We are not told that he participated in killing a Passover lamb; this would have been a perfect opportunity for Luke to have demonstrated the understanding of early believers regarding this matter. In view of the silence, we are persuaded that the believers did not advocate killing a Passover lamb outside of Jerusalem.

Also, please consider the certain turmoil that would have been recorded if Yeshua's disciples had gone to various locations and killed lambs. As we have already pointed out, the command is to kill the lambs at the place chosen by Yahweh, which was understood by Judaism as being Jerusalem. If the Apostle Paul had gone to such places as Philippi and killed lambs for Passover, the news of this practice would have spread like wildfire among his fellow Jews. Such a controversial deviation from the accepted ritual would have been recorded for us to read. Yet, once again, the New Testament is silent about killing a Passover lamb anywhere other than in Jerusalem.

The mention of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in conjunction with Paul's sailing away from Philippi, then, can reasonably be regarded as a "time marker" instead of evidence that he participated in a Passover sacrifice there. We personally believe that he abstained from leavened products during that time and that he in essence commemorated the Feast of Unleavened Bread, including the Memorial Supper, with believers in Philippi. However, we can abstain from leavened products whenever and wherever we so choose! This is not the case with killing a Passover lamb, and since there is no record that the Apostle

Paul did such a thing while in Philippi, we are persuaded that we err on the side of safety by believing that he did not. In fact, we challenge anyone to produce an approved Scriptural example of any believer killing a Passover lamb *anywhere* outside of Jerusalem. If it is so important for us to understand that it is now permissible to kill a Passover lamb outside of Jerusalem, then why has Yahweh allowed such an important matter to be subject to *interpretation* instead of giving us a plain example that would stop all arguments?

For this reason, we maintain that the Apostle Paul *commemorated* the feasts when outside of the land of Israel, but that he did not "observe" them, per se, as in participating in any sacrificial rites or expressing an expectation that believers either gather at a pre-designated feast site or else be found guilty of sin.

The above author's second reason for believing that we are to kill a Passover lamb "where we are" if we live too far from the land of Israel simply makes no sense to us. His expressed reasoning is that Josephus wrote that the command to kill a Passover lamb applies to those who lived within the bounds of Israel. This is actually our reasoning for believing that the law pertaining to killing a Passover lamb only applies to those living in the land of Israel! The comment from Josephus that the above author refers to is the same commentary that we cited above from *Antiquities of the Jews*. If Josephus wrote that the law about killing the Passover lamb only applies to those living *within* the bounds of Israel, then why say that Josephus meant that it *also* applies to those living *outside* the bounds of Israel? Are we missing something?

So there you have it: The command to kill a Passover lamb applies to those living in the land of Israel and also requires that there be a temple. Since there is no current temple in existence, even for those living in the land, the instructions for killing a Passover lamb cannot currently be carried out in accordance with how Torah instructs it to be done. Moreover, since there are no approved Scriptural examples of any believers killing a Passover lamb anywhere outside of Jerusalem, it seems to be quite presumptuous on our part to do such a thing.

The Messiah's Passover Sacrifice: Was It a Sin Offering?

As we bring this study to a close, I would like to mention a recent discussion about the topic of killing a lamb for Passover. This "discussion" was carried out via group e-mail (the same group e-mail discussion that I mentioned earlier). As one who has been sympathetic to both sides, I tried to take a neutral position with a focus of exhibiting understanding of those who kill a Passover lamb each year. My focus was geared in this direction because, as can be expected, the majority view tends to favor *not* killing a Passover lamb and as it turned out, I was the only one who spoke up in their defense. A participant in that discussion presented a view of Hebrews chapter 10 that many, including myself, have previously overlooked and his argument adds yet another dimension to this topic that should not be ignored. He demonstrated that although the Passover sacrifice is not considered a "sin offering," nevertheless, it really is. If the Messiah's fulfillment of the Passover lamb did not represent a sin offering, then *who died for our sins?* We will need to see a satisfactory answer from those who kill a Passover lamb each year before we can hope to feel comfortable about killing a Passover lamb because if this sacrifice is a sin offering, we are indeed conveying an understanding that Yeshua's sin sacrifice was not sufficient. Hebrews chapter 10 not only presents the Messiah as the offering for our sins, but He is presented as having offered Himself as "**one sacrifice for sins for ever**" (Heb. 10:12). If Yeshua's

sacrifice is considered as "one sacrifice for sins for ever," then why should we continue offering a Passover lamb year after year? As we ponder the significance of this reasoning, let's review Hebrews 10:1-25:

¹For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

³But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.

⁴For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

⁵Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

⁶In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

⁷Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O Almighty.

⁸Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law;

⁹Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O Almighty. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

¹⁰By the which will **we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Yeshua Messiah once for all.**

¹¹And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

¹²But this man, **after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of the Almighty;

¹³From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

¹⁴**For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.**

¹⁵*Whereof* the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

¹⁶This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith Yahweh, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

¹⁸Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin.

¹⁹Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Yeshua,

²⁰By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

²¹And *having* an high priest over the house of the Almighty;

²²Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

²³Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

If we can understand and acknowledge that Yeshua's fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice simultaneously fulfilled all the sin offerings and yes, even the thanksgiving offerings ... *once for all* ... then why should we need to repeat killing a Passover lamb each year? Not only do we miss the mark by arbitrarily deciding "where" Yahweh's name is to be placed, and not only do we ignore the mandate that this offering must be brought to the door of the tabernacle/temple, but we also seem to overlook the fact that when Yeshua offered Himself as that Passover offering, He offered that one sacrifice for sins *for ever*.

In Remembrance of Me

As mentioned previously in this study, Yeshua is plainly referred to as the Passover lamb in I Corinthians 5:7. We can certainly pause and reflect upon the fact that He is the representation of that lamb that was killed for each Passover. However, this is not what He told us to eat "in remembrance" of Him. He gave His disciples the bread and the cup, instructing them to eat and drink of those substances in remembrance of Him. While the lamb can be thought of as the memorial to the true Passover lamb, this is not what Yeshua instructed His disciples to do "in remembrance" of Him. Certainly, if He expected His followers to kill and eat a Passover lamb "in remembrance" of Him, we would be able to plainly read such instructions. However, no such instructions are given.

As we bring this study to a close, we would like to express that we anticipate mixed reviews in response to what we have presented. While we have attempted to offer a balanced perspective, there is bound to be information that we have inadvertently omitted and we are certain that those who believe we should kill a lamb at Passover will help to make certain that we address their perspective and any contingencies that they feel we have overlooked. We are gratified that, to this point, the response we have received from the other camp has been respectful. Here is an excerpt from an e-mail that we received from an individual who kills a lamb for Passover each year:

I would ask that you post my response in your newsletter or website so everyone can read it. I know you are not one to ignore the other side and I appreciate that aspect of your character. You and June try to address the arguments used by the opposing side. I have read enough of your articles to make that determination. I also am open to correction and if YHWH reveals to me that it is wrong for me to kill a lamb for Passover than I will stop. It will take Him to do so, and I always want to examine my heart to make sure it is pure and I would pray you and June do the same. None of us are immune from allowing our own prejudice or bias to get in the way.⁵

Our friend indicated that he will be working on a response to our commentary. As time allows, then, we will expand on this study as we incorporate other ideas and perspectives into the discussion. Our observation has been that those who do not believe we should kill a lamb for Passover have been

⁵ Excerpt from an e-mail that we received on May 1, 2011.

intolerant and disrespectful towards those who kill a lamb each year. If nothing else, we are hopeful that what we have written will at least contribute towards bringing the two sides a little closer together. If we can better understand that the motives on both sides of this issue are noble with the ultimate goal of pleasing the Father, we'll be that much closer to achieving the unity that He wants us to have.