

Israelites Eating Grain At Jericho

Commentary for February 14, 2022 — On Passover After Entering the Promised Land

Question: Hi David, can you help me here?

Joshua 5:10 **“While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho.”**

Joshua 5:11 **“And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.”**

These verses refer to Israel crossing Jordan and they are about to observe their first Passover in the Promised Land. We are told, they ate the **“unleavened cakes and parched grain”** (Joshua 5:12) on that very day, the day after the Passover!

As I understand it, I thought they couldn't eat the new grain until the Wave Sheave had been offered. If the waving of the Wave Sheaf pictured Christ rising and taking His own Blood to Heaven occurred on the day after the Sabbath — what does it mean they ate the produce the very day after the Passover?

Hope you can help me get this into proper perspective, **Questioner**.

Answer: The Israelites were not violating Leviticus 23:9–11. They did not grow that grain. They were still a pastoral society and lived in the wilderness for 40 years!

This was grain seized from the surrounding peoples and territories, while Israel was camped near the gates of Jericho. Perhaps it was grain that could not be taken into the city before the Israelites besieged it. From the Israelites point of view, this was God's gift to them. Note this passage from the *Concordant Literal Old Testament*, then read it in your favorite translations:

“It came to be, when all the kings of the Amorites across the Jordan seaward, and all the kings of the Canaanite by the sea, heard how Yahweh had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they crossed over, that their heart was melted, and no more spirit came to be in them because of the presence of the sons of Israel.

² **At that time Yahweh said to Joshua, ‘Make for yourself chert blades [chert is a type of hard stone], and circumcise the sons of Israel again, the second time.’**

³ **So Joshua made for himself chert blades and circumcised the sons of Israel at the Hill of Foreskins.**

⁴ **This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people coming forth from Egypt, the males, all the men of military age had died in the wilderness on the journey after they had come forth from Egypt.** ⁵ **All those people coming forth were circumcised.**

As for all the people born in the wilderness on the journey, after their coming forth from Egypt, they had not circumcised them. ⁶ **For the sons of Israel went**

forty years through the wilderness until the whole nation, the men of military age coming forth from Egypt who had not hearkened to the voice of Yahweh, **came to end** [they died], to whom Yahweh had sworn **not to show them the land that Yahweh had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land gushing with milk and honey.**

7 But He set up their sons in their stead. It was these whom Joshua circumcised, for they were uncircumcised since they had not circumcised them on the journey. **8 And it came to be, just as they finished circumcising the whole nation, that they remained in their place in the camp until they revived** [healed].

9 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled the reproach of Egypt away from you. So they call the name of that place Gilgal until this day.'

10 While the sons of Israel encamped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, in the plains of Jericho. **11 On the morrow after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the yield of the land, unleavened bread and toasted grain.** **12 Then the manna ceased from the morrow when they ate of the yield of the land. There was no longer any manna for the sons of Israel; in that year they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan."**

• *Joshua 5:1–12*

Note verse 12. The manna ceased and never appeared again. They had just crossed the Jordan River. Three times the phrase "[T]he yield of the land" was used. This "yield" was from the crops the farmers of Jericho and other cities planted and harvested for the Israelites. The grain had been harvested but was still kept on "the land."

God's Covenant required circumcision for Abraham and his male descendants (Genesis chapter 17) to receive God's promised blessings. Caleb and Joshua were the only circumcised men alive from those who left Egypt 40 years before. No doubt women and boys watched the gates to warn if Jericho's warriors surged to attack while Israel's fighting men recovered from their circumcision.¹ Then, in verses 13–14 Joshua encounters a supernatural being:

"It came to be, when Joshua was at Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing in front of him with his sword drawn in his hand.

Joshua went to him and asked him, 'Are you for us or for our foes?' ¹⁴ He replied, 'No, I am chief of Yahweh's host; I have now come.'"

• *Joshua 5:13–14*

Joshua was "at Jericho" to see if its army was preparing for battle. The "chief of YHWH's host" suddenly appeared before Joshua to give him a message. Perhaps he also watched the city and was ready to intervene if Jericho's army attacked the temporarily defenseless people of Israel. God did promise a messenger (an angel) to watch over them (Exodus 23:20–22).

God protected His people Israel when they did what was right, even when no one knew God was watching. Read all these verses in other translations. Modern translations are usually better than the archaic English of the King James Version.

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¹ The people of Shalem in the land of Shechem were defenseless when two of Jacob's sons attacked and killed the newly circumcised men of the small city. Read that sad story in Genesis 33:18–34:31.