

## Happy Lamb Selection Day

April 9, 2017

### **Lamb Selection Day/ also known as Palm Sunday**

Today is the 9<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar, the month we now call April. And today is the day we go to Bethlehem to select a sacrificial lamb for the Passover feast, to be sacrificed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, (which will be on Friday).

We are getting the lamb today because it is about a 6 ½ hour journey on foot from Bethlehem to Jerusalem where Passover is going to take place, and we need to have the lamb in our homes by the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, (which begins at sundown on the 9<sup>th</sup>).

This is in accordance with the instructions given by God to Moses:

*Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. (Exodus 12:3-6)*

We have to buy the lamb from Bethlehem of course, because those sheep are owned by the Sadducees and only these sheep are allowed to be sacrificed on Passover, - so they can pad their own pockets, (politics, right!)

When we reach Jerusalem, we are going to enter through the Northgate which is also called the Sheep's gate. Today it is known as the Sheep's Gate and the Lion's Gate. Jesus was called Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. He was also called the Lion of Judea.

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> we will be inspecting and scrutinizing the lamb to make sure it doesn't have any flaws or blemishes.

Matthew 21:1-18 (NIV)

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

**21** As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a

donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

<sup>5</sup> “Say to Daughter Zion,  
‘See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna<sup>[b]</sup> to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”<sup>[c]</sup>

“Hosanna<sup>[d]</sup> in the highest heaven!”

<sup>10</sup> When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

<sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

The year of Jesus’ death, He and his disciples began the trip into Jerusalem on a donkey at Bethpage (which is exactly one Sabbath day’s walk from the city walls). Bethpage is to the east of Jerusalem, and the road travels over the Mount of Olives down to the Sheep’s Gate. On the west side of the Mount of Olives, which received moisture from the winds off of the Mediterranean Sea, olives and dates were grown, and the Date Palm Branches were in abundance.

The Palm Branch was not allowed within the city of Jerusalem, because it was a symbol associated with the zealots who wanted to overthrow Rome. They shouted Hosanna, pronounced “Ho-sha-NAH”, which in Hebrew was the war cry of the zealots and meant “(God) Save Us!”. They chanted this over and over again. The ones shouting this were seeing Jesus as a conquering King, the one they thought would overthrow the Roman government and establish God’s rule again in Israel. It was because Jesus did not do this that the crowd later turned on him and shouted “crucify him!”

## Palm Sunday

So on the very day, Lamb Selection Day, that the Jews were carrying their sacrificial lambs into Jerusalem, and at the same time (the end of the day according to Mark 11:11), the Lamb of God, born in the flocks of Bethlehem, who was sacrificed for all of our sins, entered the city.

As Westerners 2000 years later, we may miss this, but to the people of that day, this was a powerful picture being painted here: Jesus is proclaimed a messiah by the people, but in doing so, they were selecting him as the Passover lamb to cover all the sins of the people for all time. He was from the flocks of Bethlehem, as all lambs were required to be in that time. The people waved the Palm branches, declaring Yeshua the Messiah. So the early followers of Christ understood this day (which we celebrate as Palm Sunday) as the day in which Jesus was selected to be our sacrifice.

Similarly, while families were inspecting and scrutinizing their sheep to make sure that they were without blemish or spot, Jesus was being scrutinized by Herod, Pilate, the Sanhedrin, the thief on the cross and they found Him to be blameless – without blemish – YET on the 14th of Nisan, at 9 a.m. in the morning, as the animal Passover lambs were being brought into the Temple to be slain, our perfect Passover Lamb Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross. At 3 p.m., as the last animal Passover lamb was killed by the high priest in the Temple, Jesus cried out on the cross, “It is finished” - and He gave up His spirit.

Let take another look at the palm branches that were waved and laid on the path as Jesus passed through. These were not symbols of the Passover feast. This is not how Passover, the first of the Jewish feasts, was celebrated. They were however gathered and used in the last of the feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:40 (NIV)

*<sup>40</sup> On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms, willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.*

The word Tabernacle mean to dwell. It was a festival to celebrate a time when God would dwell with his people.

In a broken world, It's important for all of us to know that we are loved and that there is someone who is with us, always by our side no matter what. That is why the most significant thing that ever happened to me was when God told me at age 15 that “He was with me and would always be with me”. God has made a way to do that with all of us. He came to this earth to be with us, that is what Emmanuel mean, “God with us”. He was sacrificed as the substitutionary payment for all the wrongs that mankind has ever done or ever will do. And he rose from the dead, conquering death, giving us life and sending His Spirit to dwell with us forever.

What lamb will you choose today? Will you choose the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world? He is the only lamb that is worthy of our love and devotion. Choose Him today on this Lamb Selection Day.