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# Bible Explorations Newsletter

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## Inside This Issue

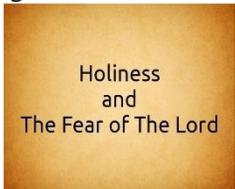
|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | The Miqrah – God’s Holy Nation                                   |
| 2 | Why Did Israel Fail? War Against the Miqrah                      |
| 3 | U.S. Congress Passes a Sunday Law                                |
| 4 | Paul and the New Moons   |
| 5 | Laughter Is Like Medicine!<br><b>Breaking News! Please Read!</b> |
| 6 | 2018 Calendar  |
| 7 | Passover/ULB Schedule  |
| 8 | Passover/ULB Schedule  |

## THE MIQRAH—GOD’S HOLY NATION

BY TED SHULTZ

In our previous study we saw that the holy convocations of Leviticus 23 were not just public meetings held at appointed times, they were also the people who were being called out to those meetings. After all, how can you have a public meeting if you don’t have any people meeting at those meetings? These meetings were called holy convocations. Lev. 23:3, 4, 7, 8, 21, 24, 35, 36, 37. Those holy convocations were the miqrah, and the people that were called to those divinely appointed assemblies were likewise the miqrah. God was meticulously careful as to what He called holy. Not only was the seventh day Sabbath declared to be a holy convocation but the annual

Sabbaths as well. Accordingly, He gave detailed instructions for guarding His holy things. Israel, however, grew careless and forgetful of the divine instructions and profaned God’s holy things, “and put no difference between the holy and profane.” Lev. 22:26. As a result Israel lost its peculiar and holy character as a people. Spiritual Israel must be careful not to repeat ancient Israel’s history. Just as Israel was to be “holiness unto the LORD” Jer. 2:3, so the remnant church is to be today.



The apostle Peter in his epistles to the Christians of Asia Minor, seems to have been writing in anticipation of persecution soon to come. That fact was soon realized in the persecutions under the reign of Nero. If you were the apostle writing to believers, many who would soon suffer martyrdom, what would be the burden of your message to them? The apostle spoke of being among the elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience. He spoke of a living hope through Jesus Christ and of an inheritance incorruptible. He spoke of being kept by the power of God through faith and that a faith tested by trials is of far more value than refined gold, and that the outcome of that tested and tried faith was eternal life. He called those dear Christians to live lives of holiness. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15, 16. Peter is here echoing the words of Jesus when He was being tempted in the wilderness. He said, “It is written.” Like Jesus, the apostle quotes from the book of the law when he writes, “Be ye holy, for I am

holy.” These calls to holiness are found repeatedly in the law—Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26.

## ONLY HOLY PEOPLE CAN KEEP HOLY THINGS HOLY

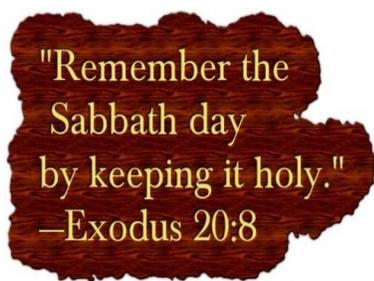
The apostle Paul stressed how essential holiness of life is to salvation. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” 2 Thess. 2:13. The apostle emphasizes that our being holy is the will of God. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.” 1 Thess. 4:3. The words holiness and sanctification in these texts come from the same Greek word and therefore mean the same thing. The testimony of the apostles is the same as that of the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. God is calling His covenant people to be holy. God called Israel out of Egypt and promised them that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant they would be a holy people. Exodus 19:5. This holy calling is now extended to God’s end time remnant people. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9.

## WHY DID ISRAEL FAIL?

So why did Israel fail of being that holy nation that God wanted them to be? The apostle Paul tells us exactly on what point they failed and gives a warning not to repeat their failure. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Hebrews 4:1, 2. It was not because God’s promises to Israel failed, but because they did not have faith in Jesus to fulfill His promises to them. “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? [Why?]? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” Romans 9:31, 32.

## ONLY HOLY PEOPLE KEEP HOLY SABBATHS HOLY

“No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them



as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. **But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.** When the command was given to Israel, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,’ the Lord said also to them, ‘Ye shall be holy men unto Me.’ Ex. 20:8; 22:31. Only thus could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshipers of God.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

## WAR AGAINST THE MIQRAH

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” Rev. 12:1. “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon; having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” Rev. 12:3. In vision John saw the woman, the church, locked in war with the dragon, Satan. Satan who had started war in heaven began to wage war against God’s church. This war will continue until he is cast into the lake of fire. Rev. 20:10. Reference is made



nineteen times to the woman throughout chapter twelve and the assaults that Satan brings against her. Then comes the prophecy that speaks in a special way to our time. “‘The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ Revelation 12:17. Some who today are living on the earth will see these words fulfilled. The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict.” *Prophets and Kings*, p. 605.

Some have charged the writer of these words for being a false prophet because no warfare was taking place against commandment keepers in 1890 when that statement was published. But in this the critics are mistaken. At that very period of time Seventh-day Adventists were being jailed, fined, put on chain gangs, or having their property confiscated because they were too poor to pay the fines levied against them. Commandment keepers were indeed feeling the ire of the dragon. In 1888 A. T. Jones testified before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor to argue against bill S.2983 introduced by Senator Blair proposing an amendment to the constitution which stated in part, “A bill to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord’s day, as a day of rest, and to promote its

observation as a day of religious worship.” *The National Sunday Law*, p. v.

## U. S. CONGRESS PASSES A SUNDAY LAW

In 1893 U. S. Congress received thousands of petitions signed by millions of citizens clamoring for the World’s Fair to be closed on Sunday, “to save the Lord’s Day from desecration.” *Catholic Mirror*, Sept. 2, 1893. The General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists held that same year drafted Resolutions which were sent to Congress under the title *Appeal and Remonstrance*. This appeal was also published in an Extra of *The Religious Liberty*, March, 1893. Even though Congress had the clear witness of both history and biblical truth set squarely before them in 1888 as to why Congress had no right nor authority to pass a Sunday law, they, nevertheless, bowing to pressure from the populace passed a Sunday law and the World’s Fair was closed on Sunday. *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 72. This action by Congress was not only an act of apostasy, it was a direct violation of the Constitution. This very thing had been predicted. “Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. *The Great Controversy*, p. 592. Make no mistake about this. The prophecy of Revelation 12:17 was beginning to be fulfilled in the year 1890 when the statement was made that “Some who today are living on the earth will see these words fulfilled.” The accuracy of this statement has been verified to the letter.

In His mercy for the remnant, God put a hold on the closing events of earth’s history until the remnant could be sealed. They were not sealable in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

They were ever so close, but close is not close enough. They had yet to receive and experience truths that they even at that time were not willing to receive. God had gems of truth that were to be gathered up and made the property of the remnant, but they were not walking in all the light that God had already given them.

## THE WOMAN WITH THE MOON UNDER HER FEET

The woman of Revelation 12:1 is represented as having the moon under her feet. The S.D.A. Bible Commentary on this states, “This symbol is understood by many commentators as representing the system of types and shadows of OT times, which were eclipsed by the greater revelation that came through Christ. The ceremonial law, being fulfilled in the life and death of Christ, could well be represented by the moon, which shines with light borrowed from the sun.” *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 807. There is a kernel of truth in the above statement

in that the woman with the moon under her feet has a connection to Old Testament times. The holy convocations are regulated by the new moons.

**Remember, the feasts which are regulated by the new moons are statutes and statutes are “not shadowy types to pass away with the death of Christ.”** *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1875. The prophet Isaiah informs us that the new moon will continue to regulate special times of worship in the new earth.



“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.” Isaiah 66:22, 23. Further, not everything represented by the system of types and shadows was fulfilled in the life and death of Christ. There are types yet to be fulfilled as Christ continues His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

## CHRIST REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AS CLEARLY AS IN THE NEW

“Beginning at Moses, the very Alpha of Bible history, Christ expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Had He first made Himself known to them [on the road to Emmaus], their hearts would have been satisfied. In the fullness of their joy they would have hungered for nothing more. **But it was necessary for them to understand the witness borne to Him by the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. Upon these their faith must be established.** Christ performed no miracle to convince them, but it was His first work to explain the Scriptures. They had looked upon His death as the destruction of all their hopes. Now He showed from the prophets that this was the very strongest evidence for their faith.



“In teaching these disciples, Jesus showed the importance of the Old Testament as a witness to His mission. Many professed Christians now discard the Old Testament, claiming that it is no longer of any use. But such is not Christ’s teaching. So highly did He value it that at one time He said, ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ Luke 16:31.

## CHRISTIANS SUFFER CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR OBSERVING PASSOVER

Christians would suffer more than excommunication for observing the Lord's holy convocations. During the reign of Theodosius in 385 A.D. "capital punishment was inflicted on the Audians, or Quartodecimans, who should dare to perpetrate the atrocious crime of celebrating on an improper day the festival of Easter." Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 3, p. 93.



Edward Gibbon

Hislop makes it clear that the so-called "Easter" of Rome was not the "Easter" of the early Christian Church. "The festival, of which we read in Church history, under the name Easter, **in the third or fourth centuries**, was quite a different festival from that now observed in the Romish Church, and at that time was not known by any such name as Easter. It was called Pasch, or the Passover, and though not of Apostolic institution, was very early observed by many professing Christians, in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ. That festival agreed originally with the time of the Jewish Passover, when Christ was crucified, a period which, in the days of Tertullian, at the end of the second century, was believed to have been the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. That festival was not idolatrous, and it was preceded by no Lent.

"To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity—now far sunk in idolatry—in this as in so many other things, to shake hands." Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 104, 105. Hislop rightly observes that the Passover was "not of Apostolic institution." In other words the apostles did not establish the observance of the holy convocations, but rather the apostolic churches were established on the law of Moses and the prophets. Thus we see that the woman with the moon under her feet had as the basis of her standing before the universe the commandments, statutes, and judgments given to Israel.

After much persecution and rampant apostasy, the woman fled into the wilderness. There in a place of tenuous safety she was "nourished" and preserved. Mosheim provides an insight into the church in its wilderness retreat. "In Lombardy, which was the principal residence of the Italian heretics, there sprang up a singular sect, known (for what reason I cannot tell) by the denomination of *Pasaginians*, and also by that of the *circumcised*. Like the other sects already mentioned, they had the utmost aversion to the dominion and discipline of the church of Rome; but they

"It is the voice of Christ that speaks through patriarchs and prophets, from the days of Adam even to the closing scenes of time. **The Saviour is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New.** It is the light from the prophetic past that brings out the life of Christ and the teachings of the New Testament with clearness and beauty. The miracles of Christ are a proof of His divinity; but stronger proof that he is the world's redeemer is found in comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament with the history of the New." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 799.

## PAUL AND THE NEW MOONS

Paul in Colossians 2:16 in speaking of the new moon and holy days [Gr. Heorte, feast] said they "**are** a shadow of things to come." Paul did not put the new moons with the ceremonial law and nail them to the cross. He saw them as having continuing application. Paul himself did not regard the annual holy convocations as a part of the ceremonial law. In previous studies evidence has been given that the early apostolic church observed the holy convocations. So it could be truly said that the early apostolic church took its stand for the sacred assemblies which were regulated by God's sacred calendar which in turn was regulated by the new moons. Thus that early church is fitly represented by the woman with the moon under her feet.

## THE CHURCH OF THE WILDERNESS

Not only did the early apostolic church have the moon under its feet, but so did the church that fled into the wilderness. Beside the seventh day Sabbath, the observance of the Lord's feast days was one of the causes for which the early Christians were persecuted. It was on the question of when the Passover was to be observed "that the bishop of Rome made his first attempt at absolutism."



"Upon this the thunder of excommunication began to roar." A. T. Jones, *The Great Empires of Prophecy*, p. 383, 384. It was during the time of Bishop Victor (A.D. 192-202) that the thunders of excommunication were roaring against the Asiatics who declared "with great spirit and resolution, that they would by

no means depart in this manner from the custom handed down to them by their ancestors. Ibid. p. 384.

That sounds like they were observing the Passover as it had been observed since the days of the apostles, since a mere 100 to 150 years previous to their time would take them and their ancestors back to the time of the apostles.

were, at the same time, distinguished by two religious tenets, which were peculiar to themselves. The first was a

notion, that the observance of the law of Moses, in every thing except the offering of sacrifices, was obligatory upon Christians, in consequence of which they circumcised their followers, abstained from those meats, the use of which was prohibited under the Mosaic economy, and celebrated the Jewish Sabbath.” Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. 1, p. 333. J. P. Perrin in his *History of the Old Waldenses Anterior to the Reformation* (1618), p. 25 informs us that the name Pasaginian (of which Mosheim speaks) is one of many names given to the Waldenses. Historian Gilly states, “Passagi and Passagini, or the inhabitants of the passes from the Latin word passagium, is one of the names given by ancient authors to the Waldenses.” William Stephan Gilly, *Waldensian Researches* (1831), p. 61.

Peter Allix, a French Protestant, refers to a Romish writer confirming Waldensian observance of the law of Moses and the Sabbath. “He lays it down also as one of their opinions, ‘that the law of Moses is to be kept according to the letter, and that the keeping of the Sabbath, circumcision, and other legal observations ought to take place.’” Pierre Allix, (1641-1717), *Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of the Piedmont*, p. 169.

## TWO WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES

How did the woman with her feet on the moon get into the wilderness? “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” Rev. 12:14.

There was another woman born by eagles’ wings into the wilderness when the Lord called Israel out of Egypt. When Israel pitched their camp in the wilderness of Sinai the Lord said, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself.” Ex. 19:1-4. When God brought Israel into the wilderness it was for the purpose of bringing them unto Himself. He delivered them from slavery and brought them out of the house of bondage and gave them commandments, statutes, and judgments so that they would be a holy nation—His peculiar treasure above all people on the face of the earth. The covenant maker is now extending His covenant to the seed of the woman—the remnant. This last remnant are His miqrah, those called out to be keepers and restorers of every divine institution. The church in its apostolic purity is manifest in the remnant. The remnant, being the seed of the woman, are identical to her standing with the moon under their feet.

## LAUGHTER IS LIKE MEDICINE

By Charmaine Vierra

Researchers from Loma Linda University studying the effects of laughter on the immune system found many significant benefits. It appears that the good old rollicking belly laugh activates a series of physiological as well as psychological responses. Some of the benefits of laughing are lower blood pressure, reduction in stress hormones, increased muscle flexion, and a boost of the immune function by raising levels of infection-fighting T-cells, disease-fighting proteins called Gamma-interferon and B-cells, which produce disease-destroying antibodies. Laughter also triggers the release of endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers, and produces a general sense of well-being. A wise old sage once said, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth up the bones.” Proverbs 17:22



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