

Passover Of The Most High God

by David C. Grabbe

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*Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.*
—Genesis 14:19-20

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Benjamin Franklin addressed President George Washington, passionately pleading to begin each day of the Convention with prayer to ask for assistance from heaven and a blessing on their deliberations. One section of his address is relevant to us in contemplating Passover:

Mr. President, . . . I have lived, sir, a long time, and, the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed, in this political building, no better than the builders of Babel.

At first glance, this address contains little to connect it with Passover, but notice the long-term conclusion that Franklin reached—that *God governs in the affairs of men*. This is a foundational facet of the Passover observance, a truth that undergirds all other lessons and meanings of the Passover.

A Handful of “Firsts”

Genesis 14 documents what is probably the first recorded Passover observance, though it is not directly named as such. In summary, the events of Genesis 14 and 15 are precursors to the Passover and Night to be Much Observed in Egypt, 430 years later. Genesis 14 first relates the story of Abram’s pursuit of the various kings who had taken Lot captive and his victorious return. Then Abram is met by Melchizedek, King of Salem:

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; [H]e was the priest of *God Most High*. And [H]e blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of *God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth*; and blessed be *God Most High*, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave [H]im a tithe of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the Lord, *God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth*, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’ . . .”
(Genesis 14:18-23; emphasis ours)

Melchizedek seems to appear out of nowhere, without any warning. There are a couple of points to ponder concerning this mention of Him. Aside from a prophecy in the Psalms, this is the sole reference to Him until the book of Hebrews. Not only is this the Bible’s first appearance of Melchizedek, but it is also the first time that a *priest* is mentioned. Furthermore, despite Melchizedek

being called a priest, the text makes no mention of sacrifices—understandable since, as the One who would later be called Jesus Christ, He had no need for propitiation to come before God on another’s behalf.

Notice also that the *priest* approaches the *man* on behalf of God, and not the other way around. This illustrates that God initiates the relationship and not man (John 6:44). It is impossible for man to worship God properly without His involvement first. We see Melchizedek bringing bread and wine, the symbols of the New Testament Passover, rather than a lamb and bitter herbs that were used in the Passover in Egypt. (As an aside, “bread” here is a very general term in Hebrew, referring to either leavened or unleavened bread.)

A Superlative Title

Another “first” appears here: This is the first time God’s title of “Most High” is used. It is used four times in this section on the eve of this Passover. It is profitable to spend some time considering this title because of its connection with Passover. Understanding how and where this divine title is used will help us realize how much of a blessing the Passover is to us.

Both Melchizedek and Abram tack on the description, “the possessor of heaven and earth.” It is easy to gloss over it, but we should consider the nature and the character of that “Possessor.” A landlord may *possess* a piece of property yet not care a whit about the tenants so long as the rent is paid. This, however, is not the way the Most High feels about His possessions. It is apparent from the rest of the Book that His ownership includes more care and concern for His possessions than we can fathom. His governance in the affairs of men springs from His will and purpose, which, despite human failure to understand them, can be described only as *good*.

Melchizedek ties the title “possessor of heaven and earth” with the fact that He delivered Abraham’s enemies into his hand, showing just how interested the Most High God is in the affairs of men. He is interested enough that He will show Himself strong on behalf of His people and will judge the unrighteous. Without exception, whenever “Most High” is used in Scripture, God is shown blessing His people with whatever is needed for His perfect will to be accomplished, whether that blessing is of knowledge, physical provision, or especially defense and deliverance from enemies. He blesses His people with His perfect personal involvement.

The New Testament records a striking example of this. In Luke 1, the angel tells Mary that her Son will be called “the Son of the Highest,” the New Testament equivalent of “the Son of the Most High.” It is the same title. Just a few verses later, the angel tells Mary that this would take place because “the power of the Highest”—or the power of the Most High God—“would overshadow” her.

Again, we see God’s people being blessed with His involvement in order to bring His perfect will to pass. In this case, His blessing includes the supernatural conception of the Son of God, which, as God promised Abraham, will end up being a blessing to all of mankind (Genesis 12:3). This sort of implication is made whenever the title, “the Most High,” is used.

Examples in the Psalms

The Psalms contain a few examples of how this title is used. The first is in Psalm 77:10-15:

And I said, “This is my anguish; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

In this passage, we see that the “right hand of the Most High” involves all of His works, all of His wonders, all of His doings. Remember, this is the “Possessor of heaven and earth,” and His right hand is continually involved in the work of “possessing.” It means more than just “owning”; it implies “keeping” in the sense of “tending” or “managing.”

Specifically, verse 15 shows that the right hand of the Most High is used for *redemption*—such as securing the freedom of Lot when he was foolishly living in a sinful place. We see redemption in the protection of Abram when he attacked what was most likely a superior force. Redemption appears again when God slew the firstborn of Egypt and protected His people from the death angel.

We clearly experienced redemption when God blessed us with the forgiveness of our sins through the substitution of the sinless life of the Son of the Most High. We commemorate this redemption each year with gravity because of the tremendous meaning, but also with joy and thankfulness because God *is* governing in the affairs of men, and especially in the affairs of His people. He blesses us with everything necessary for us to take on His image, and the Passover represents the beginning step of that blessing.

Psalm 78:17-22 contains another example of this extraordinary title:

But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?” Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.

This example also relates various works of the Most High’s providence, but it carries a negative tone because of the people’s unbelief and distrust. God blessed Israel with water in the desert, manna every day for forty years, and everything else that they needed. This was after He had delivered them from Egypt, led them between walls of water, and destroyed the might of the world’s greatest empire. The people, though, would not believe that the Possessor of heaven and earth would govern His creation favorably for them! They would not believe because He was not real enough to them.

Do we believe? Do we trust in the salvation process that the Most High is leading us through? Do we believe in His deliverance? Do we believe in His ability and willingness to bless us with whatever we need to be a part of His Family—even to the point of providing a Lamb without blemish to take away our sins? Is there any righteous work that He will not perform or any good thing He will not provide for His people?

Do we trust in His nature and His unassailable character? Israel did not, and as a result, provoked the Most High to wrath. They created their own self-fulfilling prophecy. Because they did not believe God, they believed that things would turn out badly, and in not believing Him, things turned out badly!

In the same way, those who tend toward pessimism usually prove themselves right because the pessimism clouds their view of God and thus their belief of and trust in Him. When that happens, as with Israel, they run the great risk of provoking Him to wrath. People see either God or the negatives, and whichever one they see determines their trajectory.

Deliverance from Enemies

Genesis 14:20 provides another aspect of the Most High: “And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” This exchange with Melchizedek, right before the Passover evening, occurred on the heels of Abram returning victorious from a fight against multiple kings and their armies. Protection and deliverance from enemies are conclusive themes in the biblical use of the title, “Most High.”

Christians should consider this in relation to their enemies. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that our fight is not with the people arrayed against us, but with the principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness. These are the enemies who sow division within the church, who encourage offense to be given and taken, who fan the rumor mill, who stir the pot of circumstances, who work in the background to distract God’s people from what truly matters.

Especially before Passover, it seems, the fiery darts of the wicked one fly and find their marks on any whose armor is deficient. These principalities often try to convince God’s people that they are not good enough, that they are not worthy. They hold up sins as evidence, trying to blackmail Christians into giving up.

The Most High, though, blesses us with protection, if we ask for it. He blesses us with forgiveness, if we ask for it. Is there any righteous work God will not perform or any good thing He will not provide for His people?

Another enemy is the one we all face within: the carnal man, the old man, the flesh. This part of us will probably never completely die until we are incorruptible spirit beings, but we can hold it at bay through God’s strength. All of our human efforts and setting of our wills would be useless without the Most High giving the victory.

In Romans 7, after Paul bewails the continual struggle he finds within himself, he asks, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (verse 24). He answers his own question: “I thank God—[He will deliver me] through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (verse 25). Once again, we see Christ, the Lamb, being provided as a blessing from the Most High as a means of deliverance.

The last enemy is death (I Corinthians 15:26). It will not be overcome until *everything else* has been overcome, and this does not happen until the resurrection from the dead. Our resurrection—our victory over death—is possible because our Forerunner, our Captain, went before us and blazed the trail (Hebrews 2:10). He is called the *firstborn* from the dead, showing that others will likewise rise

from the dead. Thus, we see the Most High providing the life, death, and resurrection of His Son as a blessing to us so that we can follow in His footsteps, and even have the great enemy, death, delivered into our hands.

The Father's title of "Most High" first appears in the context of Passover, and when we understand the meaning and depth of that title, it greatly enhances our appreciation of it. In short, *the Passover is a blessing that He gives to us so that we can be victorious*. We would do well to remember the words, the wonders, and the works of the Most High as He actively possesses heaven and earth and governs in the affairs of men—especially the affairs of those He has called.